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From the  
Richard D. Kimball

# WAS HE SUCCESSFUL?

A Novel.

BY

RICHARD B. KIMBALL,

AUTHOR OF "SAINT LEGER," "UNDERCURRENTS," "ROMANCE OF  
STUDENT LIFE," ETC.

"Do but grasp into the thick of human life! Every one *lives* it—to not many is it *known*; and seize it where you will, it is interesting."—GOETHE.

"SUCCESSFUL—Terminating in accomplishing what is wished or intended."—WEBSTER'S DICTIONARY.



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By RICHARD B. KIMBALL,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the  
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# CONTENTS.

---

## PART I.

### CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
In which the Hero is at once introduced to the Reader.....	11

### CHAPTER II.

His Early Life and Education .....	21
------------------------------------	----

### CHAPTER III.

Hiram's Flirtations .....	29
---------------------------	----

### CHAPTER IV.

The Village of Hampton, in Connecticut.....	32
---	----

### CHAPTER V.

The Story of Joel Burns.....	55
------------------------------	----

### CHAPTER VI.

His Love for Ellen Bellows, and what came of it.....	66
--	----

### CHAPTER VII.

The Snake attempts to charm the Innocent Bird .....	90
---	----

### CHAPTER VIII.

Charlotte and Louisa Hawkins .....	104
------------------------------------	-----

### CHAPTER IX.

A Threatened Calamity .....	115
-----------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER X.

	PAGE
Diamond cut—Paste .....	123

## CHAPTER XI.

Hiram undertakes a Great Responsibility .....	129
---	-----

## CHAPTER XII.

He encounters Hill, and goes to the Theatre .....	138
---	-----

## CHAPTER XIII.

The Old Badger circumvented by the Young Fox .....	146
--	-----

## CHAPTER XIV.

The Moment of Agony to Joel Burns .....	155
---	-----

## CHAPTER XV.

Did She love Him? .....	163
-------------------------	-----

## PART II.

## CHAPTER I.

Hiram Meeker in New York .....	179
--------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER II.

He decides what Church to attend .....	183
--	-----

## CHAPTER III.

Hiram grows greatly into Favor with the Young Ladies .....	192
--	-----

## CHAPTER IV.

The Fortunes of the Meeker Family .....	199
---	-----

## CHAPTER V.

Something Mysterious about Sarah Burns .....	208
--	-----

## CHAPTER VI.

Hiram makes love to Emma Tenant—the Result .....	214
--	-----

## CONTENTS.

7

### CHAPTER VII.

	PAGE
Catastrophe .....	225

### CHAPTER VIII.

The Interview between Hiram and Emma.....	231
---	-----

### CHAPTER IX.

Death—how the Subtle Schemer turns it to Account .....	238
--	-----

### CHAPTER X.

Hiram's Meeting with Mrs. Tenant.....	252
---------------------------------------	-----

### CHAPTER XI.

Dr. Chellis—Mr. Tenant—Hiram—Very Strange Interviews.....	256
---	-----

### CHAPTER XII.

Hiram in Serious Difficulty—how He gets out of it.....	270
--	-----

### CHAPTER XIII.

The Rev. Augustus Myrtle, Rector of St. Jude's .....	286
--	-----

### CHAPTER XIV.

Miss Thorne, the "Heiress" .....	297
----------------------------------	-----

### CHAPTER XV.

Hiram's Marriage with Arabella .....	322
--------------------------------------	-----

## PART THE LAST.

### CHAPTER I.

Extraordinary Changes.....	329
----------------------------	-----

### CHAPTER II.

Hiram's Three Children .....	332
------------------------------	-----

### CHAPTER III.

Hiram has a very Uncomfortable Interruption .....	351
---	-----

## CHAPTER IV.

	PAGE
The Two Brothers.....	361

## CHAPTER V.

Belle's Love-Affair with Signor Filippo Barbone.....	364
--	-----

## CHAPTER VI.

A Terrible Adventure.....	368
---------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER VII.

The Vision of Hiram Meeker.....	376
---------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER VIII.

Burnsville and its Inhabitants.....	379
-------------------------------------	-----


## CHAPTER IX.

The Elopement.....	385
--------------------	-----

## CHAPTER X.

In which much is developed .....	395
----------------------------------	-----

**"The greatest good which God could bestow on His creatures, was and will be their individual existence. It is even through this that He exists for them, and through this He will be to them, more and more, from stage to stage, all and in all."—HERDER.**





## WAS HE SUCCESSFUL?

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### CHAPTER I.

THE village of Burnsville, in Connecticut, was thrown into a state of excitement by the report that Hiram Meeker was about to remove to New York. Two or three elderly maiden ladies, with whom Hiram was an especial favorite, declared there was not a word of truth in the ridiculous rumor. The girls of the village very generally discredited it. The young men said Hiram was not such a fool; he knew on which side his bread was buttered; when to let well enough alone, and so forth. Still the report was circulated. To be sure, nobody believed it, yet it spread all the faster for being contradicted. I have said that the young ladies of Burnsville put no faith in the story. Possibly Sarah Burns was an exception; and Sarah, many supposed, was an interested party, and would be apt to know the truth. She never disputed the statement; and once, when appealed to for her opinion, she looked very serious, and said it might be so for all she knew.

At length there were two parties formed in Burnsville. One, on whose banner was inscribed: "Hiram Meeker is going to New York." The other, with flag bearing in large letters; "Hiram is not going."

It would have been easy, one would suppose, to settle the important controversy by a direct appeal to Hiram Meeker himself. Strange to say, this does not appear to have been done, both sides fearing, like experienced generals, to risk the result on a single issue. But numerous were the hints and innuendoes conveyed to him, to which he always gave satisfactory replies—satisfactory to both parties—both contending he had, by his answers, confirmed their own particular view of the case.

This state of things could not last. It was brought suddenly to an end one Friday afternoon.

Hiram Meeker was a member, in regular standing, of the Congregational Church in Burnsville. The Preparatory Lecture, as it is called—that is, the lecture delivered prior to “Communion-Sabbath,” in the church—was always on the previous Friday, at three o’clock P. M.

On a pleasant day toward the end of April, Hiram Meeker and Sarah Burns went in company to attend this lecture. The exercises were especially interesting. Several young people, at the close of the services, who had previously been “propounded,” were examined as to their “experience,” and a vote was separately taken on the admission of each. This over, the clergyman spoke as follows: “Brother Hiram Meeker, being about to remove from among us, desires to dissolve his connection with the Congregational Church in Burnsville, and requests the usual certificate of membership and good standing. Is it your pleasure that he receive it? Those in favor will please to signify it.” Several “right hands” were held up, and the matter was concluded.

A young man who sat nearly opposite Sarah Burns, ob-



served, on the announcement, that her face became very pale.

When the little company of church-members was dismissed, Hiram Meeker and Sarah Burns walked away together as they came. No, not *as* they came, as the following conversation will show.

“Why did you not tell me, Hiram?”

“Because, Sarah, I did not fully decide till the mail came in this very afternoon. I had barely time to speak to Mr. Chase; there was no opportunity to see you, and I could not tell you about it while we were walking along so happy together.”

Hiram Meeker lied.

Sarah Burns could not disbelieve him; it was not possible Hiram would deceive her; but her heart *felt* the lie, nevertheless.

Hiram Meeker is the hero of this history. It is, therefore, necessary to give some account of him, previous to his introduction to the reader on the afternoon of the preparatory lecture.

At the date of the commencement of the narrative, he was already twenty-two years old. He was the youngest of several children. His father was a highly respectable man, who resided in Hampton, about fifteen miles from Burnsville, and cultivated one of the most valuable farms in the county. Mr. and Mrs. Meeker both had the reputation of being excellent people. They were exemplary members of the church, and brought up their children with a great deal of care. But they were in every respect dissimilar. He was tall, thin, and dark-complexioned; she

was almost short, very fair, and portly in appearance. Mr. Meeker was a kind-hearted, generous, unambitious man, who loved his home and his children, and rejoiced when he could see everybody happy around him. He was neither close nor calculating. With a full share of natural ability, he did not turn his talents toward accumulation, quite content if he made the ends of the year meet.

Mrs. Meeker was a woman who never took a step from impulse. She had a motive for every act of her life. Exceedingly acute in her judgments of people, she brought her shrewdness to bear on all occasions. She was a capital housekeeper, a most excellent manager, a pattern wife and mother. I say, "pattern wife and mother," for she was devoted to her husband's interests, which, to be sure, were equally her own; she made every thing very comfortable for him within doors, and she managed expenditures with an economy and closeness which Mr. Meeker was quite incapable of. She looked after her children with unremitting care. They were sent to better schools, and their associations were of a better description, than those of her neighbors. She took personal pains with their religious culture. Although they were sent to Sunday-school, she herself taught them the Catechism, the Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Sermon on the Mount, beside a great variety of Gospel Hymns and Bible-stories. But along with these excellent lessons they were indirectly taught—what is very apt to be in almost every family, to almost every child—to regard appearances, to make the best possible show in the world, to *seem* what they ought to *be*; apparently a convenient short-cut to goodness, but really a turn-

pike-road made by the devil, leading far away from the desired point.

Mrs. Meeker was a religious woman, scrupulous and exact in every outward observance; in this respect severe with herself and with all around her. Yet this never prevented her having an eye to the "main chance," which was, to get on in the world. Indeed, to attempt to do so, was with her a fundamental duty. She loved to pray the Lord to bless "our basket and our store." She dwelt much on the promise of "a hundred-fold" in this world in addition to the "inheritance of everlasting life." She could repeat all the practical maxims which abound in the book of Proverbs; and she was careful, when she feared her husband was about to give way to a generous impulse in favor of a poor neighbor or relation, to put him in mind of his own large and increasing household, solemnly cautioning him that he who looked not well after it was "worse than an infidel."

In short, being fully convinced, by application of her natural shrewd sense, that religion was the safest thing for her here and hereafter, she became religious. In her piety there was developed but one idea—self. Whatever she did, was from a sense of duty, and she did her duty because it was the way to prosperity and heaven.

I have remarked how different were husband and wife. They lived together, however, without discord, for Mr. Meeker yielded most points of controversy when they arose, and for the rest his wife was neither disagreeable nor unamiable. But the poor woman had experienced through life one great drawback: she had half a dozen fine children.

Alas! not one of them resembled her in temper, character, or disposition. All possessed their father's happy traits, which were developed more and more as they grew older, despite their mother's incessant teachings and warnings.

Frank, the first-born, exhibited a fondness for books, and early manifested a strong desire for a liberal education, with a view to the study of medicine. His father resolved to gratify him. His mother was opposed to it. She wanted her boy a merchant. "Doctors," she said, "were mostly a poor set, who were obliged to work very hard by day and by night, and get little for it. If Frank would only be contented to go into her cousin's store, in New York (he was a prominent dry-goods jobber), why, there would be some hope of him—that is, if he could cure himself of certain extravagant notions; but to go through college, and then study medicine! Why couldn't he, at least, be a lawyer? There might then be a chance of his getting along."

"But the boy has no taste for mercantile life, nor for the law," said Mr. Meeker.

"Taste—fiddlesticks!" responded his wife; "as if a boy has a right to have any taste contrary to his parents' wish."

"But, Jane, it is not contrary to *my* wish."

Mrs. Meeker looked her husband steadily in the face. She saw there an expression of unusual firmness; something which she knew it to be idle to contend against; and with her usual good sense, she withdrew from the contest.

"Have it your own way, Mr. Meeker. You know my opinion. It was my duty to express it. Make of Frank what you like. I pray that he may be prospered in whatever he undertakes."

So Frank was sent to college, with the understanding that, after graduating, he was to pursue his favorite study of medicine.

A few months after he entered, Mrs. Meeker gave birth to her seventh child—the subject of the present narrative. Her disappointment at Frank's destination was severe. Besides, she met with daily evidences that pained her. None of her children were, to use her expression, “after her own heart.” There were two other boys, George and William, who, she was accustomed to say, almost bitterly, were “clear father.” The ~~three~~ girls, Jane, Laura, and Mary, one would suppose, might represent the mother's side; but alas! they were “clear father” too.

In her great distress, as Mrs. Meeker often afterward declared, she resolved to “call upon the Lord.” She prayed that the child she was soon to give birth to might be a boy, and become a joy and consolation to his mother. She read over solicitously all the passages of Scripture which she thought might be applicable to her case. As the event approached, she exhibited still greater faith and enthusiasm. She declared she had consecrated her child to God, and felt a holy confidence that the offering was accepted.

Do not suppose from this, she intended to devote him to the ministry. *That* required a special call, and it did not appear that such a call had been revealed to her. But she prayed earnestly that he might be chosen and favored of the Most High; that he might stand before kings; that he might not be slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

The happy frame of mind Mrs. Meeker had attained, at

length became the subject of conversation in the neighborhood. The clergyman was greatly interested. He even made allusion to it in the weekly prayer-meeting, which, by-the-way, rather scandalized some of the unmarried ladies present.

Mr. Meeker took all this in good part. The truth is, he regarded it as a very innocent whim, which required to be indulged in his wife's delicate situation; so he joined in her hopeful anticipations, and endeavored to sympathize with them.

It was under these auspicious circumstances that Hiram Meeker first saw the light. All his mother's prayers seemed to have been answered. The boy, from the earliest manifestation of intelligence, exhibited traits which could belong only to her. As he advanced into childhood, these became more and more apparent. He had none of the openness of disposition which was possessed by the other children. He gave much less trouble about the house than they ever did, and was more easily managed than they had been at his age. It must not be inferred that, because he was his mother's favorite, he received any special indulgence, or was not subject to every proper discipline. Indeed, the discipline was more severe, the moral teachings more unrelenting, the practical lessons more frequent, than with any of the rest.

There could not exist a more tractable child than Hiram. He was apparently made for special training, he took to it so readily, as if appreciating results and anxious to arrive at them. When he was six years old, it was astonishing what a number of Bible-verses and Sunday-school hymns he

had committed to memory, and how much the child *knew*. He was especially familiar with the uses of money. He understood the value of a dollar, and what could be purchased with it. So of half a dollar, a quarter, ten and five cents. He had already established for himself a little savings-bank, in which were placed the small sums which were occasionally presented to him. He could tell the cost of each of his playthings respectively, and, indeed, of every article about the house; he learned the price of tea, sugar, coffee, and molasses. This information, to be sure, formed a part of his mother's course of instruction; but it was strange how he took to it. Systematically and unceasingly, she pursued it. Oh, how she rejoiced in her youngest child! How she thanked God for answering her prayers!

I had forgotten to state that there was considerable difficulty in deciding what name to give the boy. Mrs. Meeker had an uncle, a worthy minister, by the name of Nathaniel. Mr. Meeker suggested that the new-comer be called after him. His wife did not like to object; but she thought Nathaniel a very disagreeable name. Her cousin, the rich dry-goods merchant in New York, who had four daughters and no sons, was named Hiram. Hiram was a good name—not too long, and very expressive. It sounded firm and strong. It was a Bible-name, too, as well as the other. In fact, she liked it, and she thought her cousin would be gratified when he learned that she had named a child for him. There were advantages which might flow from it; it was not necessary to specify; Mr. Meeker could understand to what she alluded. Mr. Meeker did not understand; in fact, he did not trouble his head to conjecture; but it was settled

Hiram should be the name, and he was baptized accordingly.

Hiram was a good boy; never in mischief, never a truant, never disobedient, nor wilful, nor irritable, nor obstinate. "Too good for this world;" that is what folks said. "Such an astonishing child!—too wise to live long." So it was prophesied; but Hiram survived all these dismal forebodings, until the people gave up, and concluded to let him live.

We pass over his earlier days at school. At twelve, he was sent to the academy in the village, about a mile distant. He was to receive a first-rate English education, "no Latin, no Greek, no nonsense," to use his mother's language, "but the real substantials."

Hiram proved to be an excellent scholar. He was especially good in figures. When he came to study book-keeping, he seemed as happy as if he were reading a romance. He mastered with ease the science of single and doubly entry. He soon became fascinated with the beauties of his imaginary business. For his instructor had prepared for him a regular set of books, and gave him problems, from day to day, in mercantile dealings, which opened up to the youth all the mysteries of "Dr." and "Cr." Out of these various problems he constructed quite a little library of account-books, which he numbered, and which were representations of different descriptions of trade, and marked with the name of some supposed company, and labelled "Business Successful," or "Business Unsuccessful," as the case might be.

We must now turn from Hiram, engaged in diligently pursuing his studies, and enter on another topic.



## CHAPTER II.

MRS. MEEKER had been a church-member from the time she was fourteen years old. There was an extensive revival throughout the country at that period, and she, with a large number of young people of both sexes, was, or thought she was, converted. She used often to speak of this circumstance to her children, especially when any one of them approached the age which witnessed, to use her own language, "her resignation of the pomps and vanities of life, and her dedication to the service of her Saviour." Still, notwithstanding her prayers and painstaking, not one of them had ever been under "conviction of sin;" at least, none had ever manifested that agony and mental suffering which she considered necessary to a genuine change of heart. She mourned much over such a state of things in her household. What a scandal that not one of *her* children should give any evidences of saving grace! What a subject for reproach in the mouths of the ungodly! But it was not her fault; no, she often felt that Mr. Meeker was too lax in discipline (she had her fears of *him*, sometimes, lest he might become a castaway), and did not set that Christian example, at all times, which she could desire. For instance, after church on Sunday afternoon, it was his custom, when the season was favorable, frequently with a child holding each hand,

to walk leisurely over his fields, humming a cheerful hymn, and taking note of whatever was pleasant in the scene—perhaps the fresh vegetation just bursting into life, or the opening flowers, or it might be the maturing fruit, or the ripening yellow grain. On these occasions, he would endeavor to impress on his children how kind God was; how seed-time and harvest always came; how the sun shone on the evil as well as on the good, and the rain descended both on the just and on the unjust. He, too, would inculcate lessons of diligence and industry—agreeable lessons, after quite a different model from those of his wife. He would repeat, for example, not in an austere fashion, but in a way which interested and even amused them, the dramatic description of the sluggard, from the book of Proverbs, commencing :

*"I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding;*


*"And lo! it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down."*

It is a memorable fact, that Hiram never accompanied his father on these Sunday excursions. Not that his mother positively interdicted him. She was too judicious a person to hold up to censure any habitual act of her husband, whatever might have been her own opinion, or however she might have remonstrated with him in private. She had no difficulty in keeping Hiram by her side on Sunday afternoons, and the little fellow seemed instinctively to appreciate why. Indeed, I doubt if the green fields and pleasant meadow, with the pretty brook running through it, had any charms for him even then. At any rate, he was satisfied

with his mother's reason, that it was not good for him; he had better stay at home with her.

At fourteen, Hiram was to become "pious." So Mrs. Meeker fervently hoped, and to this end her prayers were specially directed. Her son once safe within the pale of the church, she could be free to prosecute for him her earthly plans, which could not be sanctioned or blessed of Heaven so long as he was still in the gall of sin and bonds of iniquity. She labored to explain to him how impossible it was for an unconverted person to think an acceptable thought or do a single acceptable act in the sight of God. All his labor was sin while he was in a state of sin, whether it was at the plough, or in the shop, or store, or office, or counting-room. She warned him of the wrath to come, and she explained to him with minute vividness the everlasting despair and tortures of the damned.

Hiram was a good deal affected. He began to feel that his position was perilous. He wanted to get out of it, especially as his mother assured him if he should be taken away—and he was liable to die that very night—then, alas! his soul would lie down in everlasting burnings. At last, the youth was thoroughly alarmed. His mother recollected she had continued just one week under conviction, before light dawned in on her; and she considered that a proper period for her son to go through. She contented herself, at first, with cautioning him against a relapse into his old condition, for then seven other spirits still more wicked would have possession of him, and his last state would be worse than the first. Besides, he would run great risk of sinning away his day of grace.



It was soon understood in the church that Hiram was under concern of mind. Mrs. Meeker, on the fourth day, withdrew him from school, and sent for the minister to pray with him. He found him in great distress, I might say in great bodily terror; for he was very much afraid, when he got into bed at night, that he would awake in hell the next morning. The clergyman was a worthy and a sincere man. He was anxious that a true repentance should flow from Hiram's present distress, and the lively agony of the child awakened his strongest sympathy. He talked very kindly to him; and explained in a genuine, truthful manner, what was necessary. He dwelt on the mercy of our heavenly Father, and on his love. He prayed with the lad earnestly, and with many affectionate counsels he went away.

Hiram was comforted. Things began to appear in a pleasanter light than ever before. He had only to repent and believe, and it was his duty to repent and believe, and all would be well. So it happened that when the week was out, Hiram felt that he had cast his burden on the Lord, and was accepted by him.

There were great rejoicings over this event. Mrs. Meeker exclaimed, while tears streamed from her eyes, that she was ready to depart in peace. Mr. Meeker, who had by no means been indifferent to his son's state of mind, and who had sought from time to time to encourage him (rather, it must be confessed, to his wife's annoyance), was thankful that he had obtained relief from the right source. The happy subject himself became an object of a good deal of interest in the congregation. There was not the usual attention, just then, to religious matters, and Hiram's conver-

sion was seized on as a token that more fruits were to be gathered in from the same field; that is, among the young.

In due course he was propounded and admitted into the church. It happened on that day that he was the only individual who joined, and he was the observed of all observers. He was a handsome boy, well formed, with an interesting face, blue eyes, and a profusion of light hair shading a forehead indicative of much intelligence. All this was disclosed to the casual observer—indeed, who would stop to criticise the features of one so young?—else you would have been struck by something disagreeable about the corners of his mouth, something repulsive in the curve of those thin lips (he had his mother's lips), something forbidding in a certain latent expression of the eye; while you would remark with pain the conscious, self-possessed air with which he took his place in the broad aisle before the pulpit, to give his assent to the church articles and confession of faith.

The good minister preached from the text, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth," and in the course of his sermon held up Hiram as an example to the unconverted youth of his flock. On Monday he returned to school, prosecuting his studies more diligently than ever. He felt that he had secured the true salvation, and was safe now in whatever he undertook. He was very careful in the observance of all his religious exercises, and, so far as I can ascertain, never neglected any of them.

Thus happily launched, Hiram continued at school till he was seventeen. He had, for the last two years, been sent to Newton Institute, one of the best schools in the state,

where his advantages would be superior to those of the academy in his native town. Here he learned the higher branches of mathematics, and studied with care mercantile or descriptive geography with reference to the different products of the earth. During this time his proficiency was excellent, and his conduct always exemplary.

At length his course was completed, and Mrs. Meeker felt that her cousin, the dry-goods jobber in New York, would be proud of such an acquisition to his establishment. He had been duly apprised that the boy was named for him, and manifested by his inquiries a good deal of interest in Hiram. Although they generally met once or twice a year, Mrs. Meeker did not inform her cousin of her plans, preferring to wait till her son should have finished his academical course before making them known. Her first idea was to send him to New York with a letter, in which she would fully explain her hopes and wishes. On second thought, she concluded to write first, and await her cousin's reply. It will be seen, from the perusal of it, that she took the proper course. Here it is:

"NEW YORK, *May 15th*, 18—.

"DEAR COUSIN: Your letter of May 12th ~~is~~ before me. I am glad to hear you are all well at Hampton. We are much obliged for your invitation for the summer. I think you may confidently count on a visit from my wife and myself during the season, and I have no doubt some of the girls will come with us. I know *I* shall enjoy it for one, and I am sure we all shall.

"As to my namesake, I am glad to hear so good an account of him. Now, cousin, I really take an interest in the

.

lad, and beg you will not make any wry faces over an honest expression of my opinion. If you want the boy to make a first-rate merchant, and SUCCEED, don't send him to me at present. Of course, I will receive him, if you insist on it; but, in my opinion, it will only spoil him. I tell you frankly, I would not give a fig for a city-bred boy. But I will enter into this compact with you: I will undertake to make a first-class merchant of Hiram, if you will let me have my own way. If you do not, I cannot answer for it. What I recommend is, that you put him into one of the stores in your own village. If I remember right, there are two there which do a regular country trade, and have a general assortment of dry goods, groceries, crockery, hardware, etc., etc., etc. Here he will learn two things—detail and economy—without a thorough knowledge of which, no man can succeed in mercantile business. I presume you will consider this a great falling off from your expectations. Perhaps you will think it petty business for your boy to be behind a counter in a small country store, selling a shilling's worth of calico, a cent's worth of snuff, or taking in a dozen eggs in exchange; but there is just where he ought to be, for the present. I repeat, he will learn detail. He will get at the value of all sorts of merchandise, and acquire a practical knowledge of barter and trade. When he learns out there, put him in another retail store of more magnitude. Keep him at this three or four years, and then I agree to make a merchant of him. I repeat, don't be disappointed at my letter. I tell you candidly, if I had a son, that's just what I would do with him, and it is what I want you to do with Hiram. I hope you will write me that you approve of my

plan. You may rely on my advice at all times, and I think I have some experience in these matters.

"We all desire to be remembered to your husband and family.

"Very truly, your cousin,

"HIRAM BENNETT."

He had added, from habit, "& Co.," but this was erased.

The letter *was* a heavy blow to the fond mother; but she recovered from it quickly, like a sensible woman. In fact, she perceived her cousin was sincere, while she appreciated the good sense of his suggestions. Her husband, whom she thought best to consult, since matters were taking this turn, approved of what Mr. Bennett had written. It was, therefore, decided that Hiram should become a clerk in one of the stores in Hampton.

How he got along there, and finally entered the service of Mr. Burns, of Burnsville, must be reserved for future chapters.



## CHAPTER III.

HIRAM exhibited from his boyhood a fondness for female society. Even when at the district-school, he preferred spending "noon-time" among the girls, to racing with the boys, pitching quoits, wrestling at "arm's-end" and "backhold," or playing base-ball and goal. His mother was careful to encourage Hiram's predilections. She remarked that "nothing was so well calculated to keep a young man from going astray as for him to frequent the society of virtuous females."

By the time Hiram was in his teens, he had been smitten with at least half a score of little girls of his own age. As he grew older, his fondness for the sex increased. I do not record this as any thing extraordinary, except that in his case a characteristic selfishness seemed to be at the bottom even of these manifestations. Hiram was not influenced by those natural emotions and impulses which belong to youth, and which, unless kept under proper restraint, are apt frequently to lead to indiscretions. For there ran a vein of calculation through all he did, whose prudent office it was to minister to his safety.

After Hiram joined the church, he was regular in his attendance on the evening meetings. He always went to these meetings with some young girl, whom, of course, he accompanied home after the services were over. As I have

said, he was a handsome fellow, and bestowed particular care on his dress and his appearance generally. He was good-natured and obliging, and withal sensible ; so that the young men who envied him, and might be inclined to call him a fop or a dandy, could not prefix "brainless" to these epithets, and thus cast ridicule on him. The fact is, he was shrewder than any of them, and he knew it. They soon discovered it, and so did the girls, to the utter discomfiture of his rivals.

At all the village gatherings, including the sewing-societies, and the lectures, the prayer-meetings, and meetings of Sunday-school teachers, and so forth, Hiram was not only a favorite, but *the* favorite, with the sex. He had a winning, confidential manner, when addressing a young lady, even for the first time, which said very plainly, "We know all about and appreciate each other," and which was very taking. He assumed various little privileges, such as calling the girls by their first name ; giving notice that a curl was about to fall, and offering to fix it properly ; picking up a bow which had been brushed off, and pinning it securely on again ; holding the hand with a kind and amiable smile for a brief space after he had shaken it ; and sometimes, when he had occasion to see one of his friends home, keeping her hand in his all the way after it was placed within his arm.

You may ask why such liberties were permitted. Simply because they were so very equally distributed, that they had come to be regarded as a matter of course. In fact, Hiram was a privileged person. He was so polite, so attentive, so considerate, what if he did have his peculiarities?—how ridiculous to make a fuss about such trifles ! So the "trifles"

were acquiesced in. Besides, I am inclined to think each fair one supposed she was the especial object of Hiram's regard, and that his attentions to others were mere civilities. I do not say Hiram so announced it. I know he did not; for he was not a person, even when a youth, to commit himself. Yet if they *would* mistake general politeness for particular attentions, surely it was not his fault—oh, no!

There were those who refused to give their adherence to Hiram's almost unlimited sway. And, as parties usually proceed to extremes, the girls who formed the opposition generally declared him to be a pusillanimous, mean-spirited fellow; they detested the very sight of his smooth, hypocritical face; he had better not come fooling around them—no, indeed! Let him attempt it once: they would soon teach him manners!

It is to be observed that these remarks did not emanate from the prettiest or most attractive girls of the village, all of whom were decidedly and emphatically on Hiram's side. They seemed to enjoy the excitement under which their adversaries were laboring, and retorted by exclaiming, "Sour grapes!"—asserting that those who so shamefully vilified Hiram, would be glad enough to accept his attentions if—they only had the opportunity.

Hiram, meantime, pursued the even tenor of his way, secure in his position, enjoying to the full extent of his selfish nature all his "blessings and privileges," for which he thanked God twice daily, wondering how men could be so blind and misguided as to turn their backs on religion when there was so much happiness and peace in giving up all to God!

## CHAPTER IV.

MR. BENNETT was correct in his surmise that there were two stores in the little village of Hampton. Of one of these Thaddeus Smith was proprietor. He was one of the solid men of the place, and had "kept store" there for the last forty years, succeeding his father, who was among the early settlers of the town. He had continued on with his customers in the good old fashion, extending liberal credits and charging a regular, undeviating profit of thirty-three and a third per cent.

About five years previous to Hiram Meeker's leaving school, Mr. Smith's peace of mind was greatly disturbed by the advent of a rival, in the person of Benjamin Jessup, who took possession of an advantageous locality, and, after a week's bustle with teams and workmen transporting, unpacking, and arranging, displayed his name, one fine morning, in large gilt letters, to the wondering inhabitants of Hampton, and under it the cabalistic words, "CHEAP CASH STORE."

A large number of handbills were posted about the village, informing the good people of the opening of the afore-said "cash store," and that the proprietor was prepared to sell every variety of goods and merchandise "cheap for cash or ready pay," by which last expression was meant acceptable barter. Of course, the whole town flocked to inspect

Mr. Jessup's stock, and price his goods. The cunning fellow had valued them only at about cost, while he declared he was making a living profit at the rates charged, and a living profit was all he wanted. Furthermore, he allowed the highest prices for the commodities brought in by the farmers, and gave them great bargains in return. He was especially accommodating to the ladies, permitting them to tumble his whole stock of dry-goods for the sake of selecting a pretty pattern for an apron, or finding a remnant which they were "welcome to."

Mr. Smith was sadly grieved. Although some very old-fashioned people stuck sternly to him, refusing to be allured by the bait of great bargains, and so forth and so forth, yet his store was nearly deserted. Thaddeus Smith was a perfectly upright man. It is true, he charged a large profit on his goods—this was because it had always been his habit, and that of his father before him. But he was accommodating in his credits, and lenient to debtors in default. His word could be relied on implicitly, and his dealings were marked by scrupulous honesty.

On this trying occasion he called his son, who was supposed by some to be his partner, into consultation, and asked him what he thought of the state of things.

"I think this, father," was the reply, "that we cannot expect to go on any longer in the old style. We must reduce our profits; and, to do this, we must be more particular in our credits, and buy with more care and of different people. In this way I will engage, by pursuing a straight-forward, energetic course, that we shall hold our own against the cash-man over the way."

It was some time before Mr. Smith could be persuaded. It was not just the thing, taking advice from a "boy," although the boy was past thirty, and had a family of his own. He yielded, however, and Thaddeus, Junior, was permitted to carry out his plan. He made a trip to New York and purchased goods himself (instead of sending an order for them, as had been the habit), where he could find the best bargains at least ten per cent. cheaper than his father was in the habit of buying; came home; got out handbills in his turn, requesting the people to call at the "old stand," look at the fresh stock, selected personally with great care, and bought cheap *for* cash, but which would be sold as usual on approved credit.

This gave the tide a turn in the old direction, and Mr. Jessup had to set to work anew. He was not a bad man in his way, but neither was he a good man. He was not very scrupulous nor severely honest. His prices varied, so folks discovered; and he, or rather his clerks, sometimes made mistakes in the quality of articles sold. After a while the cash system sensibly relaxed, till at last both establishments settled down into a severe and uncompromising opposition.

There was a pretty large back country which received its supplies from Hampton, and so both stores managed to do a thriving trade; the Smiths retaining as customers a large portion of the staid and respectable population, while Mr. Jessup's business depended more on his dealings with the people from the surrounding neighborhood. There was a very different atmosphere about the stores of these two village merchants. The Smiths were religious people, father

and son; not merely so in name, but in reality. A child could have purchased half their stock on as favorable terms as the shrewdest man in the place.

Mr. Jessup, on the contrary, varied as he could light of chaps; that is, according to circumstances. He was, however, an off-hand, free-and-easy fellow, with generous qualities, which made him popular with most who knew him. He did not hesitate to declare that his views on religious subjects were liberal—a bold announcement for a man to make in Hampton. Indeed, his enemies put him down for a Universalist, or at best a Unitarian, for which they claimed to have some reason, since he seldom went to church, although his wife was a communicant, and very regular in her attendance.

I have been thus particular in describing the two rival establishments, because Hiram Meeker is to enter one of them. The reader will naturally suppose there can be little doubt which, and he has a right to exhibit surprise on learning that he decided in favor of Mr. Jessup. I say *he* decided. His father preferred that he should go with the Smiths. His mother was of the same opinion; but she permitted her son, who was now very capable of acting for himself, to persuade her that Jessup's was the place for him. "More going on—greater variety of business—much more enterprise," and consequently more to be learned.

It would be difficult to follow closely the train of reasoning which led Hiram to insist so perseveringly in favor of Mr. Jessup. For the reasons he gave were on the surface, while those which really decided him were keen and subtle, based on a shrewd appreciation of the position of the two

merchants, and his probable relation to one or the other. With the Smiths, Hiram saw no room for any display of his own talent or enterprise; in the other place he saw a great deal.

Once decided on, he was speedily settled in his new abode, where he formed a part of the household of the proprietor, together with the head-clerk, a 'cute fellow of five-and-twenty, who was reported to be as "keen as a razor." It was evident that Mr. Jessup valued him highly, from the respect he always paid to his opinion, and from his giving the management of the business so much into his hands. Besides, it was rumored that he was engaged to Mr. Jessup's oldest daughter, a handsome, black-eyed girl of eighteen, a little too old for the "meridian" of Hiram; but who, with her mother, was on excellent terms with the Meeker family. The name of the head-clerk was Pease—Jonathan Pease; but he always wrote his name "J. Pease." There was also a boy, fourteen years old, called Charley, who boarded at home. This, with Mr. Benjamin Jessup, constituted the force at the "cash store."

Hiram had taken the place of a pale, milk-and-water-looking youth, with weak lungs, who had been obliged to quit on account of poor health. This youth had been entirely under the control of Pease, so that he dared not venture an opinion about his own soul or body till he was satisfied Pease thought just so. All this helped to add to the importance of the head-clerk. Even Mr. Jessup, unconsciously, felt rather nervous about differing with him. Indeed, Pease was fast becoming master of the establishment. This Hiram Meeker knew perfectly well before he entered it.



When Pease ascertained that Hiram was about to come there as clerk, without his advice being asked, he regarded it as an invasion of his rights. He did not hesitate to speak his mind on the subject to Mr. Jessup. He tried strongly to dissuade him from taking a "gentleman-clerk," and declared it would require one extra boy to wait on him, and another to correct his blunders.

It was of no use. Mr. Jessup had not the slightest idea of the peculiar qualities of Hiram; but he knew that if he received him, it would be the means of making an inroad into the conservative quarter, beside securing the trade and influence of the Meekers. He went so far as to explain this to Pease, in the most confidential and friendly manner; but the latter was not to be persuaded or mollified. As he could not prevent the advent of Hiram, he resolved to make his position just as uncomfortable as he possibly could. But he little knew the stuff he had to deal with.

The first morning after he had taken possession of his new quarters—his sleeping-room was over the store—Hiram rose early, and was looking carefully about the place, when Pease came in, and asked him why he did not sweep out.

"I have not yet learned the regulations, Mr. Pease, but am ready to begin any time," was Hiram's quiet reply.

Now, Pease had purposely sent Charley away on an early errand, so as to be able to put this work on the new-comer. He replied briefly, in an arrogant tone, that it was his business every morning to sweep out the store, and then sand the floors; adding, in order to preserve a semblance of truth, "When the boy happens to be here, he will help you."

Pease was a little astonished to see how readily Hiram set to work. The store was not only carefully swept, and the floors sanded, but many articles which were scattered about were put in their place, and carefully arranged; so that after breakfast, when Mr. Jessup came in, he remarked on the neat appearance of the store, without knowing to what it was owing.

Thus was the first attempt of J. Pease to annoy Hiram completely foiled. Furthermore, Hiram kept on sweeping and sanding, although Charley was present; indeed, he declined his assistance altogether; and once, when Mr. Jessup remarked (he had observed to whom the change in the appearance of the store was due) that it was quite unnecessary for him to perform the boy's work, Hiram quietly answered, that he much preferred to do it to seeing the store look as it did when he first came there.

It took our hero but a short time to familiarize himself with the minutæ of Mr. Jessup's business. It was not long before Pease began to feel that there was a person every way his superior who was fast acquiring a more thorough insight into affairs than he had himself. He began to fear that certain private transactions of his own would not escape Hiram's observation. He felt magnetically, that instead of bullying and domineering over the new-comer, Hiram's eyes were on *him*, whatever he did. This was insupportable; but how could he help it? The more work he imposed on Hiram, the better the latter seemed to like it, and the more he accomplished.

"Damn him!" said Pease between his teeth; but cursing did not help the matter, so Pease discovered.

By degrees, several young ladies who were not in the habit of calling at Jessup's, began to drop in to look at the dry-goods. It was in vain that Pease stepped briskly forward to wait on them, with his most fascinating smile; they wanted to see Mr. Meeker. Pease was bursting with rage, but he was forced to restrain his passion. On one occasion, on seeing two attractive-looking girls approaching, he sent Hiram to the cellar, to draw a gallon of molasses; and, as the weather was cold, he calculated that he would have to wait at least a quarter of an hour for it to run. When the young ladies entered, they inquired for Hiram; Pease reported Mr. Meeker as particularly engaged, and offered his services in the most pathetic manner.

"Oh, we are in no hurry," was the reply; "we can wait."

And they did wait, greatly to Pease's disgust, and to Mr. Jessup's delight, who happened to come in at that moment, for he knew Hiram would be sure to make some handsome sales to them.

At length came poor Pease's crowning misfortune. Mary Jessup began to discover Hiram's agreeable qualities, and his superiority in every respect over his rival. Now, if there is any one thing which the sex admire in a man more than another, it is real ability. Mary Jessup was a quick-witted girl herself, and she could not fail to perceive this quality in Hiram. She had heretofore regarded him as a boy; but the boy had grown up almost without her observing it, and now stood, with his full stature of medium height, admirably proportioned. It was not long before she consented to accompany Hiram to the Thursday-evening lec-

ture. What a pleasant walk they had each way, and how gracefully he placed the shawl across her shoulders!

Pease was furious. "How absurd you act!"—that was all Mary Jéssup said in reply to his violent demonstrations, and she laughed when she said it. What *could* Pease do for revenge? He thought, and cogitated, and dreamed over it; it was of no use. He began to feel himself under the fascination of Hiram's calm, persevering, determined manner—a manner distinguished by tokens of latent power. For no one in praising him ever made the ordinary exclamations, "Such a smart, energetic fellow!" "So active and efficient!" "A driving business chap!" No; on the contrary, one would set him down as quite the reverse, for he was always very quiet, never in a hurry, and by no means rapid in his motions. Yet he impressed you with an idea of his superiority, which his peculiar repose of manner served to heighten.

It can easily be guessed that Mary Jessup and J. Pease quarrelled, at last seriously; and the engagement, if there had been any, was broken. The next evening, on her return from the sewing-society with Hiram, he ventured to retain her hand in his, and from that time she felt that there was an "understanding" between them. She would have found it difficult to say why, for Hiram had never spoken sentimentally to her. His conversation was on ordinary topics, yet always in a low, meaning, confidential tone.

( [Has the reader any desire that I should lay bare the innermost thoughts and feelings of this youth not yet eighteen? Would you like to be told how curiously he smiled to himself as he continued to sweep out and sand that little village store? Would you care to know how he gloated

over the discomfiture of his rival? Shall I endeavor to depict his feelings when he saw that he had actually gained the affections of Mary Jessup, for whom, beyond a sensuous enjoyment of her presence and her society, he did not care a fig? Shall I explain how, while acting for his employer quite as a good, honest man would act, his *motive* was to serve *self*, and self only? or shall I permit the reader gradually to acquire a knowledge of Hiram's characteristics as the narrative proceeds?]

This brings us to the end of Hiram's first year with Mr. Jessup. He had accomplished nothing rapidly, but he had kept on accomplishing something every day. He had not made a single false step. The consequence was, he had not a single step to retrace. The end of the year found him already very high in Mr. Jessup's esteem. Hiram had proved his value by increasing his employer's business at least ten per cent. in the village, while he was daily becoming more popular with all who traded at the store.

To Pease this was an enigma, for Hiram never volunteered to wait on a customer when the former was present, and only stepped forward when specially sought. Even with the young ladies who came to the place, with whom he was on intimate terms of acquaintance, Hiram found no time to laugh and talk, although he always managed to say an agreeable word in a low tone. Toward Pease, Hiram's conduct was always the same—perfectly respectful; as if never losing sight of the situation of the one as head-clerk, and of the other as subordinate. But by continually making himself so useful in the establishment, he was gradually undermining his comrade's position, and Pease felt his influ-

ence dissolving, he hardly knew how or why; but he felt it all the more forcibly for not knowing.

Thus the commencement of the new year found the occupants of the cash store. Hiram's situation had become very agreeable. He was putting into practice the theories of his education. He was high in favor with his employer; and whenever he entered the house, which was but a few steps from the store, he was greeted by Mary Jessup with that peculiar welcome so charming between those who love each other, yet which to him was pleasing only because it gratified his animal nature and his self-love.

Early in the second year, an incident occurred which served to bring out Hiram's character, and change decidedly the state of affairs. One morning, while he was engaged with a customer, Mrs. Esterbrook entered the store. Now, that lady was the wife of Deacon Esterbrook, one of the most substantial men of the town, and a strong supporter of the Smiths. In fact, she had never set foot in Mr. Jessup's place before that morning; but certain goods, lately ordered by the Smiths, were unaccountably delayed, while Mr. Jessup's were fresh from the city, and just opened. The dressmaker had been engaged, and could not come again for she did not know how long, and Ellen must have a nice school-dress ready forthwith. So the lady determined for once to break over rule, and step into the opposition store. No doubt the fact that so respectable and pious a young man as Hiram was a clerk there, had its influence in the decision; it made the place itself more reputable, many said.

And now she came slowly in, a little distrustful, as if en-

tering on forbidden ground, and expecting to see some extraordinary difference between the place of business of an ungodly person like Jessup and that of the honest-minded Smith. Thanks, however, to Hiram's persevering industry, the store was a model of neatness and order; and Mrs. Esterbrook, who was herself a pattern in that way, found her harsh judgment insensibly relaxing, as she stepped to the counter where Pease stood, and asked quite amiably to see some of the best calicoes just in from New York.

Pease, the narrow-minded idiot, thought this a good time to play off a smart trick on one of Smith's regular customers. So he paraded a large variety of goods before her, and took occasion to recommend a very pretty article, for which he charged a monstrous price because, he said, it was a very scarce pattern, and it was with great difficulty they had secured a single piece. As the lady herself could perceive, it had not been opened before; not a soul in the village had even seen the outside of it.

Now, it must not be supposed that Mrs. Esterbrook was different from the rest of her sex, and insensible to the pleasure of having the first dress cut from a new piece. Indeed, she determined, on this occasion, to take two dresses instead of one: Emily was coming home, and would want it. Just as Pease was about to measure off the desired quantity, Mrs. Esterbrook exclaimed—

“You are sure those colors are fast?”

“Fast, ma'am! fast as the meeting-house round the corner. We will warrant them not to run nor change. Why, for color, we have nothing like it in the store.”

All this time, Hiram had been serving his customer; but

with both ears and at least one eye attentive to what was going on near him.

Again Pease commenced to measure, when Hiram stepped deliberately forward and said :

“Mr. Pease is mistaken, Mrs. Esterbrook. Those colors are *not* fast.”

“What the —” hell do *you* know about it? Pease was going to say ; but he stopped short at the second word, utterly abashed and confounded at the extraordinary assumption of the junior clerk. Never before had Hiram made such a demonstration. Now he stood calm and composed, firmly fortified by the truth. He looked and acted precisely as if he were the principal, and the objurgation of Pease died on his lips. He attempted to cast on Hiram a contemptuous glance, as he managed to say—

“Perhaps you know more about it than I do,” and turned away to attend to a new-comer.

“I am much obliged to you, Mr. Meeker, I declare,” said Mrs. Esterbrook.

“On the contrary, it is I who should be obliged to you for looking in. You must excuse the mistake. Mr. Pease is not so familiar with calicoes as I am. But I will now wait on you myself. We have a box of goods in the back-store, not yet open, and I am sure I can find in it just what you want.”

Any one who had seen Hiram’s air, and heard him speak, would have taken him for the proprietor. With what a low, respectful tone he addressed the lady ! how pleasantly it fell on the ear ! An immense box of merchandise to be opened, and all the contents overhauled, to please her !



Charley was summoned, hammer and hatchet freely used, and the goods displayed. Hiram, who knew much better what Mrs. Esterbrook wanted than she knew herself, selected something very acceptable. The price he put at first cost. Not content with that, he actually sold the lady silk for a dress, putting it at cost also; and no human being could have been in better humor than she.

"I am very sorry, Mrs. Esterbrook, for your disappointment about the first calico you selected," continued Hiram. "I do hope you and other members of your family will look in often, even if you do not purchase; it sometimes helps one to form a judgment, to look at different stocks. But I must be perfectly frank with you. We profess to sell cheap, very cheap, but I can never offer you similar articles at the price you have these; they are given you precisely at cost, as a slight compensation for your trouble in having to look a second time. Besides, it is a matter of mere justice to those worthy people, the Smiths, to say we do not sell our goods at these prices, and I beg you not to so report it."

"What an excellent young man you are!" said good Mrs. Esterbrook, in the fulness of her heart.

"Really, my dear madam, I cannot see any special excellence in simply doing my duty."

Hiram smiled one of his amiable, winning smiles, and bowed his new customer politely out of the store.

By this time the dinner-hour had arrived. Not a word had been spoken by Pease to Hiram since the scene just recounted. Not a syllable did he utter at table. Hiram, on the contrary, entered into familiar conversation, placid as usual, and enjoyed his dinner quite as well as he ever

had done. When the meal was finished, Pease asked Mr. Jessup if he would step into the store a few minutes. Mr. Jessup accordingly walked over.

"I want to know, Mr. Jessup," he demanded, when all were together, including Charley, "whether you are the owner in here, or Hiram Meeker?"

"Why do you put such a question, Pease?"

Thereupon Pease told the whole circumstances, very much as they occurred. Mr. Jessup made no reply; he was taken aback himself. Hiram said not a word.

"It's so, ain't it, Charley?" cried Pease.

"I've nothing to say about it," answered the boy. He liked Hiram, and detested Pease, and was glad to see him humiliated.

"It *is* so," observed Hiram.

Mr. Jessup was astounded.

"I shall think the matter over seriously, young men, and make up my mind about it this evening. Now let us attend to business."

Mr. Jessup had decided in his own mind that Hiram's conduct was very reprehensible; not that he cared about Pease being snubbed—that he rather enjoyed than otherwise—but he thought what Hiram had done would serve to cast discredit on the establishment. Before, however, deciding to censure him in presence of his fellow-clerks, he determined to speak with him privately. He took occasion, without the knowledge of Pease, to ask Hiram to step to the house; and, once there, he requested him to give his version of the affair. Hiram replied that Pease had stated it very correctly.

"What could be your object," asked Mr. Jessup, "in doing what would throw disgrace on my store—for you knew such an admission would disgrace us?"

"To serve your interests, as in duty bound," replied Hiram.

Mr. Jessup could not so understand it, and Hiram then took calmly to explain how dishonest it was for Pease to do as he did. It had very little effect on Mr. Jessup. His nerves were too strong to be unsettled by a moral appeal. He told Hiram he was to blame, and said he should be obliged to so express himself, when they all met: and he must add a caution for the future.

"Fool!" exclaimed Hiram, startled out of his usual propriety, "do you not comprehend if that woman had gone out of your store with the calico, that she not only would never enter it again, but she would publish your name over town as a swindler and a cheat, and you never would hear the end of it? Pease had charged her double price, and the goods will not stand a single washing. And you know whether or not you are ready to pay off the mortgage Deacon Esterbrook holds on this house."

Mr. Jessup colored deeply. When he purchased his house, he left a pretty large mortgage on it, which the owner had sold to Deacon Esterbrook, who was a moneyed man, and who now held it, quite content with his yearly six per cent.

"You seem to interest yourself in my private affairs," said Mr. Jessup, in a sarcastic tone.

"Why shouldn't I, sir, so long as I am in your employ?" answered Hiram, without noticing the irony.

"You're a devilish strange fellow, anyhow," said Mr. Jes-

sup, musingly; "but I confess I never had a person about me half so useful."

"I could be of much more service to you if you would conduct your business on strict mercantile principles."

"Why, what would you have me do different from what I am doing?"

"I would have every thing done straight and HONEST, Mr. Jessup," said Hiram, firmly.

"Do you mean to say I am not honest?"

"It is not necessary for me to say any thing on the subject. I am only talking about the management of your business. You censure me for not standing still and seeing one of your neighbors grossly cheated, by which you would have lost some of the best customers in town, to say the least. By taking the course I did, I saved the credit of the concern instead of injuring it, and I even spoke of it as a mistake of Pease, instead of a deception."

Mr. Jessup was already convinced, as indeed his petulance proved, that Hiram was right, but he had some pride in not appearing to yield too soon.

"I understand the matter better now; and really, Hiram, you did just about the right thing, that's a fact. Honesty is the best policy, after all. I shall tell Pease he did very wrong to attempt any of his tricks on such a person as Mrs. Esterbrook; and in future—"

"In future one of us must be an absentee from the premises," said Hiram, coolly.

"Why, what do you mean?"

"Just this: Pease's year is up next week, and then one of us must leave."

Mr. Jessup fell into a brown study. He reflected on the admirable manner Hiram had performed his duties; he could not shut his eyes to the fact that several excellent customers had been secured through his influence; he considered the respectability of the Meeker family, and he tried to mind how indifferent Mary had become to Pease, while she seemed gratified when Hiram was near. Again, Pease, when measured by Hiram's more comprehensive tact and shrewdness, seemed a booby, a nobody, and Mr. Jessup wondered how he ever acquired such an influence over him; and he was the more disgusted with himself the more he thought about it.

"It is working right, after all," he said to himself. "I shall be well rid of Pease, and Hiram shall take his place." Then, rising from his seat, he observed: "I will think the matter over carefully, and you shall have my decision to-day. Now set to work as if nothing had happened."

Hiram went back to the store as certain of the fate of Pease as if he was himself to decide it. "Check-mated" something like that passed from his lip. His countenance, however, gave no sign of triumph, nor indeed of any feeling.

In the evening Mr. Jessup announced that, after due consideration, he was of opinion the conduct of Pease was censurable, that the interference of Hiram was justifiable, if not, indeed, praiseworthy.

"Perhaps you would like to settle with me!" said Pease, ferociously.

"Just as you please," replied Mr. Jessup.

"Well, I guess I have stayed about long enough in this

place, when I've lived to see you coming the honest dodge so strong as that—darned if I hain't!" •

Next week Pease had quit, and Hiram Meeker was head-clerk.

Great was the astonishment through the town when it was ascertained that Pease had been "discharged from Jessup's store for cheating"—so the story went. Mr. Jessup was too shrewd not to make the most of the circumstance. He declared, in his off-hand manner, that he never professed to have the strait-laced habits of some people; he confessed he did not like a fellow the less for his being 'cute in a trade, and eyes open; but when it came to lying and cheating, then any of *his* folks must look out if he caught them at it—that's all!

With most of the people this frank, open avowal was very convincing; but there were certain obstinate persons, such as are everywhere to be found, and who are fond of going against the general opinion, who did not hesitate to declare that this was all gammon. They knew Jessup too well to "allow" that he cared any thing about it, not he. Nothing but the fear of that honest young Meeker led to the disgrace of Pease, who no doubt would now be made the scapegrace for all Jessup's shortcomings in the store-way. So it went. But in the balance of accounts Jessup was a great gainer.

Of course, numerous were the questions put to Hiram. He preserved great discretion—would say little. It did not become him to speak of Mr. Jessup's private matters. Good Mrs. Esterbrook was not silent, however. The story was repeated and repeated. It reached the parsonage; it found its way among the customers of the Smiths. Mrs. Ester-

brook felt herself a good deal raised in her own importance, that the head-clerk of a store she was never in before should be summarily dismissed for misconduct toward her. She began rather to like that Mr. Jessup (the calicoes and silk proved such bargains, and just what she wanted): a man to do as he did was not so very far out of the way; and as for his wife, she was a charming woman—she always said so. Mary, too, what a sweet girl! Well, she should at least divide her custom between the two stores, if the Deacon was willing; and the Deacon *was* willing, for he wanted Jessup to do sufficiently well to keep up his interest-money prompt.

Not only did Mrs. Esterbrook call frequently, but so did many others of the Smith faction. I need not say that Hiram was indefatigable. He secured the services of a nice, active young fellow, whom he took great pains to teach, and every thing went on like clock-work. Mr. Jessup was content, for he saw that he was constantly gaining custom; though, in fact, he was a good deal confused, and hardly felt at home in his own place, so completely did Hiram bring it under his own control.

The first thing he undertook was an entire overhauling of the stock, and a close examination of its value. Then he insisted, yes, insisted that the prices should be marked in plain figures on the goods, so that everybody could see for themselves.

Jessup remonstrated. "Thunder! what will become of us at this rate? I tell you, there are some it won't do to be frank with. Even old Smith never undertook to expose his marks!"

"The very reason why we should do so," said Hiram. "We are honest."

I wish you could have heard the tone in which Hiram said that, and have seen the expression of his countenance. It made Jessup's flesh creep, he did not know why. So Hiram, as usual, had his own way, and overhauled every thing. Lots of old goods, piled away out of sight, as unsalable, were brought forward, carefully examined, and marked down, on an average, to half cost. Then appeared handbills, to the effect that Mr. Jessup had determined, prior to getting in a complete new, fresh, fashionable lot of dry-goods, to dispose of the stock on hand at a tremendous sacrifice. These were sent to every house all over the country and into the adjoining villages, everywhere within twenty miles. How the people rushed to buy! And when they came, and found really that great bargains were to be had, they resolved to come again when the new goods should arrive.

Thus Hiram triumphed. In six months after J. Pease left, Benjamin Jessup's store was *the* store of Hampton, and Benjamin Jessup himself on the high-road to prosperity.

. . . . .

Hiram Meeker was sitting alone in his room over the store, late one evening. He had been with Mr. Jessup a year and eleven months. Another month, and the second year would be completed.

"I believe," so ran the current of his thoughts, "I have learned pretty much all there is to be found out here; have not done badly, either. Cousin Bennett's advice to mother was right. I am not ready to go to New York yet; there



is much country knowledge to be gained. Let me see: I will drive over to Burnsville next week. Joel Burns is carrying every thing before him, they say. All sorts of business. A first-class man; neither a Smith nor a Jessup. I met Sarah Burns last week, at a party over at Croft's—lovely girl. I think Burnsville will suit me."

Thereupon Hiram Meeker took up his Bible, which lay on the table near him, drew himself a little closer to the fire, moved the lamp into a convenient position, and read one chapter in course; it was in Deuteronomy. Then he kneeled in prayer for about five minutes. As soon as he had finished, he went to bed, equally satisfied with his labors and his devotions. Complacently he laid his head on the pillow, and was soon asleep.

"I am sorry to go, Mr. Jessup; but I have my fortune to make yet, you know, and I must look a little to my own interests."

"Yes; but confound it, Meeker, what is it you want? I expected to raise your salary; in fact, it's no account what you charge me, you mustn't go—that's settled."

"Indeed, I must."

"Why, what is the matter? If you say so, I will take you into partnership, though you are not one-and-twenty. Really, Hiram, don't leave us in this way."

"I repeat, I am sorry to do so; but, as I have no intention of living in Hampton, it is now time I should quit."

"But what on earth am I to do without you?"

"Persevere in the course you are now pursuing. Stick

honestly to good principles, Mr. Jessup, and you will continue to prosper."

"Damn it, I know better!" exclaimed Mr. Jessup, pettishly; "I mean—I swear I don't know what I mean—[Hiram's cold blue eye was fixed on him]—cussed if I do! But I say 'tain't honesty which has done the thing for me. No; old Smith is honest—so is his son; I respect both of them for being so—yes, I do. You are honest, too, Hiram—straight as a shingle—have always found you so; but, I can't tell why, yours seems another sort of honesty from Smith's honesty, and that's a fact."

Benjamin Jessup had a dim perception of the truth; but the more he tried to explain, the more he floundered, till Hiram came to his relief, and to his own also, for he did not greatly enjoy the comparison which Jessup was attempting to institute.

"I think I understand you. The fact is, in the management of your business, I have endeavored to combine what tact and shrewdness I am master of, with scrupulous fair dealing and integrity."

"That's it, Hiram! now you've hit it; but it's the shrewdness that's done the work. Oh, I shall never get a man who can fill your place!"

In due course, Hiram left for Burnsville. The prayers and good wishes of the village went with him. (Mary Jessup was disconsolate; but why? Hiram had never committed himself. All the girls said, "What a fool, to think he was going to marry anybody older than himself!" and they laughed about Mary Jessup.

## CHAPTER V.

You will find, as you travel through the country, but few very poor people in New England. Rarely are the "select-men" called to act either on applications for admission as one of the "town's poor," or to "bind out" a boy or girl till one-and-twenty.

One evening—it was the close of a cold, raw day in the latter part of November—the stage deposited a woman, and a lad perhaps twelve years old, at the village tavern in Sudbury. She was intending to ride all night; indeed, she had paid her "fare" through to New Haven; but, seized with sudden illness, she was compelled to stop. Her malady proved to be typhus fever. The doctor was summoned, who subjected his patient to the terrific treatment then in vogue for that disorder, and in due course she died.

It turned out, on inquiry, that the woman, whose name was Burns, was on her way to a married sister's in Pennsylvania; further, that she was a widow, the lad her only child, and the sister in Pennsylvania the only near relation she had in the world. This sister was by no means in affluent circumstances, but she could offer a home to "Sarah," which the latter was glad to accept. After disposing of the trifling articles unsuitable to carry with her, she had barely money enough to defray the expenses of herself and "Joel" to their new abode.

The poor woman's journey was interrupted, as we have explained, at Sudbury, and a new direction given to it. She departed for "the undiscovered country," leaving little Joel to cry himself asleep; for the time, heart-broken and desolate.

There was not time to write to the married sister; so the selectmen, after ascertaining what money still remained in the purse of the deceased, undertook the burial. They ordered a cheap pine coffin, scantily "stained." It cost but a quarter of a dollar to dig the grave, and old Sally agreed to "lay the woman out" for the comfortable dress she wore on arriving at the inn.

Of the three selectmen of Sudbury, two were from the east part of the town—thrifty, hard-working farmers; the third was a Mr. Bellows, a popular store-keeper of the village. The latter had not interfered with the action of his colleagues, because he himself was very busy; and they, having little to do at that season, were pleased with the excitement the affair afforded.

But, passing the inn the morning Mrs. Burns was to be buried, Mr. Bellows stepped in a moment at the request of the landlord, a kind-hearted fellow, who did not feel quite satisfied with the arrangements. Ascending to the chamber, he saw a sad but handsome-looking boy standing over a rudely-constructed coffin—a picture of sorrow and despair. The little fellow had witnessed the action of the coarse-hearted men who took the direction of the funeral. He heard their private discussion as to the "cost of burying the woman." He was a witness to their haggling with Aunt Sally about laying her out. He could hear various

propositions as to what was to be done with *him*. He saw his mother hurriedly draped for the coffin, and placed inside of it. He did not sob nor cry; a dreadful reality had so overcome him, that he lost the power of doing either. Once or twice, when everybody had left the room, he had stolen softly up and kissed the face of the corpse, and some tears would then roll down his cheeks.

It was at such a time that Mr. Bellows entered, and his heart smote him that he had not sooner looked in. He spoke kindly to Joel, which served to loose the flood-gates of his grief, and for a time he continued to cry in the most piteous manner.

Mr. Bellows soon decided what to do. His own family was small; he had a wife and one child, a little girl nine years old. He took Joel in his lap; told him not to cry; that he should go home with him, and be *his* boy. The tone in which this was uttered had more effect to soothe the lad than what was said to him. After a few minutes, Joel was persuaded to leave the room and to accompany his new friend to the house. Mr. Bellows called on his minister, and requested him to perform the funeral-rites at the grave; for so little interest had been shown in the fate of the strange woman, that her illness had not even been communicated to the clergyman, and the selectmen did not think it "worth while to have any funeral!"

Then Mr. Bellows hurried back to the inn. The coffin was placed in a wagon. It was followed by the clergyman and Mr. Bellows, the two other selectmen, the landlord of the inn, and his wife. The burying-ground was soon reached, a short prayer made, and the company dispersed, leaving the

man to fill up the grave according to contract. Mr. Bellows and his two associates returned to the tavern together, in order, as the latter expressed it, to "settle up the business." Going into the sitting-room, and taking seats around a small table, one of them opened the subject in a serious and important tone, indicative of the weight of responsibility he felt was resting on his shoulders, by asking what was to be done with the boy.

"What do you think best to do with him?" said Mr. Bellows.

"Well, I suppose there is room in the town-house: there is nobody there now but Aunt Lois and foolish Tom; and we can probably bind him out next spring."

"I don't think we have a right to charge the town with the expense," said selectman number two. "We know where the boy came from. The best way is to send him back to Granby."

"He has got an aunt," said the other; "hadn't we better write to her?"

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Bellows, "I will cut this matter short. I will take the lad myself. You shall bind him out to me in the regular way. I do not think you need fear any interference from the town of Granby. As to his aunt, I propose first to write and get her consent. If she prefers to take the boy, why, she will send for him."

This question disposed of, the spokesman next proposed to go into the accounts; which meant his own and his neighbor's charge for time and personal expenses twice from East Sudbury with horse and wagon. They thought six dollars about right.

"How do you propose to be paid?" quoth Mr. Bellows.

"Twenty dollars and seventy-two cents was in their possession, taken from the pocket of the woman after she died."

"And how did you dare interfere with property of any kind," exclaimed Mr. Bellows, his smothered indignation bursting forth, "without consulting me? Don't you know that the landlord has the first claim on every thing till his bill is paid? Don't you know, too, that you are simply doing the town's business, and if you have any claim, the town must pay you for it?"

"Well, that is so, I guess," said the third. "It *is* agin the town. I'll take my chances, for one—had rather settle it that way, any how."

The result of the conference was, that the whole business, including the twenty dollars and seventy-two cents, was handed over to Mr. Bellows, leaving his colleagues to make out and collect their bill at leisure. Joel's aunt was written to, and freely gave her consent that the boy should remain with his new friend. The latter promptly paid the bill at the inn, and the doctor for his services, and soon after paid his colleagues what they claimed, lest it might be a subject of comment when Joel grew up.

He was a good man, this Mr. Bellows; not specially refined in manner, but possessing a delicacy of character and a lively sensibility which placed him among the ranks of Nature's noblemen. He had been fortunate in business, and owned the principal store in the place, where he exercised a decided influence.

Little Joel gave promise of not disappointing his patron's expectations. In fact, he was a child of most engaging

manners. His features were not regular, nor indeed handsome; but he had bright black eyes, a fine complexion, and an open, ingenuous countenance. He was treated by Mr. Bellows as if he were his own son. To be sure, Joel had his unpleasant scenes to pass through. As nothing is ever lost sight of in a small country village, the story of how he came to be living with Mr. Bellows was not forgotten. At school, occasionally, one of the boys would, on some slight provocation, point at him and call him "Bellows's nigger;" or make faces, and cry, "Charity-boy!" "Town's poor!" Now, fortunately, Joel had a happy, joyous nature—somewhat fiery and irascible, but still joyous—else he might have become morbidly miserable. As it was, these manifestations only provoked his anger, and led him forthwith into a rough-and-tumble fight, in which, whether victor or not, he always showed unquestionable pluck. If he came off second-best a dozen times, he went confidently into the thirteenth trial, brave as Bruce, and equally successful. At length the voice of gossip was hushed. Joel became the most popular lad in the village. Everybody liked him, and, what is better, he deserved it.

But the evil days came at last to good Mr. Bellows—came after years of happy, moderate, unclouded prosperity. First, his wife died. This was when Joel was twenty years old, and Ellen Bellows seventeen. The illness was short, and the daughter was summoned from boarding-school in time only to attend her mother's funeral. Mr. Bellows, after that, as everybody said, was an altered man. He could not bring his mind to business. Some people thought at times that he acted strangely, by which they meant that he was a



little out of his head. Still, his affairs could not suffer while such a young man as Joel Burns was about. The fact is, that in some things matters were even better managed than before. But great mistakes were made in the purchase of goods, which Mr. Bellows continued to attend to, and which Joel had too much respect for his benefactor to criticise.

The succeeding year, speculation in wool ran high. Mr. Bellows was anxious to go into it. Joel took the freedom of begging him not to do so. The latter appeared to be persuaded; but he did what was worse than engaging actively in purchases, for then he would have had Joel's tact and energy to aid him. He lent his name to an acquaintance, for a very large amount, who was to go extensively into the scheme with him, and divide the profits. The result was disastrous. Wool fell rapidly. An attempt was made to borrow money on it, and hold it over to the next season—worse and worse: Mr. Bellows was ruined.

One morning, very early, several attachments were levied on his goods, and the store was shut up. One of the officers next proceeded to the house and took possession there, so that Mr. Bellows was tied hand and foot.

I suppose few of my readers can appreciate what it is for a man to "fail up" in the country. In our large cities, it is regarded, to be sure, as a misfortune, but one to which every merchant is exposed; and the usual course is, to propose a compromise, obtain a release, and set cheerfully to work again, with loss of property, doubtless, but *not* with any damage to reputation. ( But in the country, failure is regarded as a disgrace; and a "failed man" is looked and pointed at something as a felon would be.

When Joel awoke in the morning and found every thing in the hands of the sheriff, he was astounded, for Mr. Bellows had not told him a word about his last year's operations. He perceived that the amounts were larger than could ever be realized. He took in the whole situation at a glance. He hastened to consult with Mr. Bellows, but he was listened to with apathy. The merchant would say but little, and that was so incoherent and unintelligible, it was evident he was laboring under mental aberration. He continued moody through the day, and the next morning was found dead in his bed. He had severed an artery.

At this time Joel was in his twenty-second year. Already displaying extraordinary capacity in affairs, this event served to call out all his resources.

I ought to have mentioned, before this—what everybody will guess—that Joel was desperately in love with Ellen Bellows; without, however, giving her the least reason to believe so, beyond that silent, unobtrusive devotion which girls, after all, are not very apt to mistake. Joel felt that, in his situation, he had no right to attempt to win Ellen's affections; but he unconsciously took the very best way to do so. In his intercourse with her he was reserved, almost formal, and, I may say, apparently indifferent. Ellen, when she came home from school to spend her vacations, used to feel a good deal piqued that Joel was not more demonstrative in his welcome. I cannot believe she did not comprehend pretty well how Joel really felt; but his manner annoyed her, nevertheless. For example, he would frequently step aside and permit another to wait on Miss Bellows, when Miss Bellows would much prefer that Joel

had not been so accommodating. In fact, she was vexed with him half the time for what she called his stupidity, and half the time tantalized by his studious reserve. Meanwhile, honest and true-hearted, Joel pursued his career of self-martyrdom.

Now the scene had changed, and Joel was no longer the diffident youth, but a man, competent and energetic. He took the direction of every thing; nothing was overlooked. Of course, the relatives were sent for. It was the old story: they had paid great respect to their rich cousin, but they did not seem to care much for the memory of the broken-down insolvent.

The day of the funeral arrived—a dreary November day. It was just eleven years from the time Joel's mother was buried, and he himself taken to the house of Mr. Bellows. Joel did not forget it, and it gave additional strength to carry out what devolved on him. There was a very large attendance at the house. The circumstances of the failure and subsequent suicide, the situation of the only daughter, and the many petty incidents which were now the town talk, excited the curiosity of the good people, and there was an opportunity to gratify it by attending the funeral. They wanted to see how the corpse would look; they were crazy to know how Ellen Bellows would appear, and what Joel Burns would do. So the house was thronged. After all, there was not much to satisfy their curiosity. The corpse was not exposed; Ellen Bellows, contrary to all custom in New England, remained in her chamber, for which, as you may believe, she was pretty thoroughly picked to pieces; and Joel Burns sat quietly, with sad but tranquil counte-

nance, among the mourners. The next day he called Ellen aside, and asked her whether she was not going home with her aunt.

"Am I not to stay here?" she said.

Joel could not explain to her just then the absolute ruin which stared her in the face. He simply answered: "No, Ellen, you must go away for a few weeks. There is much to do, and for a time you had better be absent."

"Very well, Joel, if you advise it. I have nobody else to advise me;" and she burst into tears.

Joel remained calm. He had previously made up his mind just what to do, and he brought all the energy of his nature to sustain him. His composed air helped to restore Ellen; she tried to be as calm as he.

"But aunt has not invited me to return with her," she said.

"Oh! but she will, I am sure," replied Joel, and he went out rather abruptly; for here was an obstacle to his plan which did not before occur to him. He proceeded at once to the aunt, and found her preparing to leave that afternoon.

"You will take Ellen with you, I suppose?" he said.

"I am sure I had not thought of doing it. You know all the children are at home, and really we have no room at present."

Two weeks previous she had written a pressing invitation to Ellen to come at this particular time. Joel bluntly reminded her of it.

"Yes, but circumstances alter cases. The fact is, I can't afford to maintain the girl, and I don't think I had better begin; and that's the English of it, Joel, if you force me to

say so. You know very well that there won't be a cent left."

"I think I know more about that than you do," replied Joel, with an air which would have done credit to a *diplomat*, "and, I assure you, Ellen will *not* be left penniless; and if you will insist on her going with you for a short time—mind, I say, *insist*—I promise before long to make certain disclosures which will satisfy you as to my assertion. But she must not be here while they are settling up. You understand?"

The lady did not understand, but Joel carried his point by the aid of the mystery with which he surrounded it. This put her on her good behavior at once, lest she should lose the promised revelation. She spoke even affectionately to Ellen, and declared she should not let her remain in the house alone, but that she must go home with her.

Before the two left Sudbury, Joel had a very long interview with Ellen. What passed at that interview never transpired; but the young girl's countenance, though very sad, did not wear the desolate and despairing expression which it exhibited before.

The stage drew up, the ladies got in, and it rolled away, leaving Joel and the deputy-sheriff the sole possessors of the premises.

## CHAPTER VI.

A FEW miles to the northeast of Sudbury the country, at the time I speak of it, had a wild and forbidding appearance. This was partly owing to the immense forests which stretched along a continuous ridge of land, covering both sides of it and the plain below. On one side of this ridge the face of the country was very rough; on the other side, through a fine intervalle, flowed a stream of respectable size called Pine Creek, which took its rise in the mountains at some distance, and was fed by innumerable springs and rivulets from the surrounding hills. Nearly a thousand acres of these lands were owned by an old merchant in New York, who had taken them for debt many years before, and had become, as he said, tired of paying taxes on them.

Joel Burns had had his eye on the property for two or three years. What his views were, we shall presently see; for no sooner did Miss Bellows quit Sudbury with her aunt, than Joel, after remarking to the sheriff that he did not propose to interfere with him in any way, proceeded to pack his trunks, which he removed to the inn. Then he hired a horse and wagon for a week, and set off, no one knew whither.

He came back within the time, and found a committee of creditors awaiting his return. They wanted to engage him to sell out the stock of goods, and to close up Mr. Bellows's

affairs. Joel declined the service, although the offers were liberal, and coupled with the intimation that it would be the means of starting him in business as the successor of Mr. Bellows. Joel resolutely refused. He knew the estate was hopelessly insolvent, and that he could not be of the least service to Ellen by any labors he should undertake; besides, he did not care to even appear to thrive out of the broken fortunes of his patron. When still pressed by the now perplexed creditors, he turned sharply on them, and said:

"Gentlemen, don't you think it would have been more judicious, not to say more humane, had you waited on Mr. Bellows in his lifetime, and requested *him* to undertake this service, instead of pouncing on his property, closing his store, and hurrying him into his grave? He was an honest man, and would have worked honestly for your benefit, and I would have aided him. As it is, I do not feel disposed to lift a finger for you. Good-morning!"

Joel left the same day for New York, and did not again return to Sudbury. Some weeks afterward, in mid-winter, a report was circulated that he was living in the woods on Pine Creek. Then the story went abroad that the poor fellow was crazy, and had turned hermit. This was followed by other rumors, still more ridiculous.

I have no desire to alarm the reader on Joel's account. It is time, therefore, I should say he had formed extensive plans for the future, which he was proceeding to carry out. During his week's absence, he went carefully over the entire tract owned by the old merchant in New York. This lay on both sides of the creek, and extended to the eastward

quite over the "ridge." It was well timbered and beautifully situated. After making these observations, Joel proceeded to New York, and called on the proprietor. He stated his object to be to purchase a hundred acres of the tract, for which he would pay five dollars an acre cash. He wanted, besides, the refusal of the rest of the property, for a certain time, at the same rate. The old merchant was pleased with Joel's ingenuous manner, as well as with his intelligence. He questioned him minutely about the lands, for he had never seen them, and asked him what he proposed to do with his purchase. Joel answered promptly and truthfully. He put the owner in possession of every material fact.

"And all you will give is five dollars per acre?"

"Yes."

"Do you think that is all the lands are really worth?"

"I hope to make them worth much more to me, else I would not seek to buy," responded Joel. "What they are worth to you, is for you to judge after what I have said about them."

Thereupon the old gentleman told Joel he would do better by him than he asked. He would sell him the whole, receive the five hundred dollars, and take back a mortgage for the balance. Joel would not accept this proposition. He wanted one hundred acres, and he wanted to pay for them, and the money was ready at five dollars the acre; and he desired the refusal of the balance at the same rate. The bargain was closed in this way, and Joel went on to his property rejoicing.

The plot selected by him was from the portion nearest



the road, which here was about a mile distant, and at a point of the stream most favorable for the erection of a *saw-mill*. This hundred acres Joel had had carefully surveyed before he went to New York. It embraced a portion of the "ridge," with a front on the stream. The old village was miserably situated, on the ancient principle of putting it in the centre of the township; and a new road had been talked of for some time, which would shorten the communication between two important points, and leave it to one side. This was known to Joel, and it led him to greater energy in trying to secure the property. But he did not omit to mention this circumstance in his interview with the proprietor, though, if the truth be told, he was tempted to keep silent. Joel Burns had a fine moral sense, to violate which gave him pain. Without going through any argument on the subject, he *felt* that it would amount to a deception if he withheld the information.

At the time of Mr. Bellows's death, Joel was worth about twelve hundred dollars. His benefactor had not only paid him a full salary, but, besides this, perceiving that Joel displayed an aptitude for business, he allowed him privileges by which he was able to make some money on his own account. The result was, that he had accumulated the sum I have mentioned, from which had now been disbursed five hundred dollars for the land-purchase.

Through the winter Joel was very busy. He hired four stout, active lumbermen, built a rude log-hut, which was comfortable enough inside, and all set to work first to cut a road to the highway. Then they commenced clearing. The timber was magnificent first-growth pine. It cut up splen-

didly. The lumbermen now saw what Joel was driving at. They began to respect the young fellow who looked so much like a boy, yet who showed such pluck, nerve, and sagacity. After a while, in a pleasant position on the ridge could be seen a very neat log-house in progress of erection. It contained four rooms—a spacious edifice for the woods—all, of course, on the ground-floor, for there was no second story. Great attention was paid, in a rude way, to the interior; and, by spring, it was finished.

During the winter Joel was twice absent from the “settlement” for two or three days. He was making a visit to—Ellen’s aunt. That worthy woman had only been half-persuaded when she invited her niece home. Very soon, she began to think she had made a mistake in “harboring” her, especially as the news spread abroad that Bellows’s estate was a very great deal worse than nothing. To be sure, Joel’s presence reassured her, he looked so competent, and spoke so confidently yet still so mysteriously. On his second visit, however, the lady pretty flatly intimated that she was losing confidence in his assertions. She did not believe her brother had left Ellen a cent in any shape.

“And I tell you what it is, Joel Burns, you need not think we are going to support her. She must earn her living like other folks.”

“I will be responsible for Ellen’s board,” said Joel, indignantly. “I would have said that before, but I should feel mortified to have her know that I had made the offer, or that you had accepted it.”

“You need not mount your high horse with me, Joel,” retorted the other, but in a mollified tone. “You know I

am just as kind to Ellen as anybody would be under the circumstances."

"As kind as Mr. Bellows would have been to Tilly and Eliza, were they left orphans, I suppose," interrupted the still indignant Joel.

"Yes, to be sure. You don't imagine I should have expected him to take care of my children!"

"But he would have done it, though."

"Well, that may or may not be; he is dead and gone, poor man! and I have done my best to make it pleasant for Ellen, and she will tell you so. We have got along very well; I like her, and her cousins like her; and I am satisfied, after what you have said."

By the middle of April, the people of Sudbury had made up their minds that Joel Burns was neither crazy nor exactly a hermit, nor yet a fool, though some candidly admitted that they had been fools when they so judged of him. For, by the middle of April, a saw-mill, with a double set of saws, had been put in operation, and was turning out the lumber rapidly. Quickly the knowing ones saw into it (but they did not see into it till Joel had made his demonstration), and now wondered why they had overlooked the speculation.

One very keen fellow determined to make the most of Joel's beginning. He examined the records at the office of the register of deeds, and discovered that Joel had title to but a hundred acres. Thereupon he went to New York, with the object of purchasing the adjacent lands. Imagine his chagrin, when he was told that Joel had the refusal of the whole tract! With a low cunning, he endeavored to

make the old merchant dissatisfied with the sale, by telling him that he had parted with his property for a quarter of its value; in fact, had given it away. He would have offered twice the money himself.

"I am glad to hear you say so," was the only reply the fellow received, "for I take a great interest in that young man. So he has got his mill a-going, has he? Good!"

"But if I should offer you ten dollars an acre for the next hundred-acre lot, don't you think you could manage to let me have it?"

"No."

What an excitement there was when our smart man returned and gave an account of his trip! Then followed all sorts of rumors. Joel was in partnership with a rich old fellow in "York," who was going to let him have all the money he wanted. There was to be a new village right away, situated somewhere—on the ridge—on the stream—across the creek—on the plain—under the hill! What wouldn't the speculators give to know *just* where?

With the erection of the saw-mill, several little huts went up near it, for the use of those employed there. These huts were not made of logs (there was plenty of lumber now), but cheaply constructed, and clapboarded with slabs. Some of the Sudbury wits derisively called the place "Slab City." The lumbermen seemed to like this name, for they at once adopted it, and it has never been known by any other. But, before this, a remarkable event occurred, affording still greater food for town-talk and gossip generally. The neat log-house on the ridge had been comfortably furnished, and Ellen Bellows, now Ellen Burns, installed as its mistress.

On Joel's third visit the mystery was solved in a manner quite satisfactory to the aunt. To do that lady justice, we must say she was not half so selfish or so calculating as she might have been. It is true she had not generosity enough to run the risk of offering Ellen a home as long as she might require one, whatever should happen. But she was tolerably kind to her; and when she heard that a wedding was to be speedily improvised, she entered into it heart and soul, and made every thing pass pleasantly, yes, happily. Furthermore, I am bound to record that she refused to take one penny for Ellen's "board," although she was pressed to do so.

"Do you think I am an old hunk, Joel, because I did not feel able to undertake Ellen's support? Prudent I try to be; it is my duty. Haven't I my own children to look after? But because I *am* prudent and do my duty, can't I show some kindness to my poor brother's only child? Don't talk to me about 'board;' and, Joel, don't say any thing to Ellen about our previous conversation. You know I have always been perfectly satisfied with every thing you told me."

Joel felt too happy then to question the fact; if, indeed, it could be questioned. He reassured the good woman on that head, and added that he should in due time expect visits from Tilly and Eliza.

"They will be delighted to go; and, what is more, Mr. Barron" (her husband) "has been thinking a good deal of leaving here, and I should not be surprised if he paid you a visit one of these days to see what chances offer, for we have all heard how smart *you* have been."

It is essential that I should explain to the reader why Joel Burns—who was ingenuous and truthful, and by no means fond of mystery or concealment—should make use of both in his intercourse with Ellen's aunt. We have previously stated how desperately in love he was with Ellen, and further, how hard he tried to make himself believe that his affection could never be reciprocated. When, however, the day of trial came suddenly on *her*, all the nonsense was scattered from Joel's brain like mist before the wind. But the romance in his heart was not dissipated, because romance is *not* nonsense. True romance is a genuine element in our natures; and, so long as we preserve it, we are young. When Joel found himself placed in the position of Ellen's sole protector, he took prompt and decisive steps *for* her protection. But while he hoped to win her for his wife, he could not endure the thought that possibly a part of his success might be due to the change in Ellen's fortunes, or that her choice should not be free and unrestrained. It was for this reason that he mystified the aunt, and procured for Ellen a cordial invitation to stay with her "till the business matters were settled," thus mystifying Ellen also. She, poor girl, continued in happy ignorance of her absolutely destitute condition. She loved Joel dearly, and it was one of her most delightful day-dreams to plan how she could aid him in his projects by putting him in possession of all she should have—yes, all.

The evening before the wedding, after Joel had given a full history of the progress of the "settlement," and what he hoped to do in the future, Ellen, overcoming the timidity which had before prevented her speaking, exclaimed :

"O Joel! how much you have done!—all alone, too! When you get what is coming to me, won't *that* help you? and you shall have the whole of it, dear Joel, every dollar!"

She stopped and blushed, half-frightened at her boldness. Tears came into Joel's eyes, he was so happy. He threw his arms around his beloved, and pressed her to his heart.

. . . . .

People could now understand where the village was to be. The new road had been laid out, and was in course of construction. It passed along the ridge, near the centre. On computing the distances, it was found that this point would be a convenient one for a stage-house, where passengers could pass the night. Joel sold to the stage-company what lots they required, at a very low price, on condition that they would erect a first-rate public house.

The water-power at "Slab City," three-fourths of a mile distant, attracted attention. The "fall" was large, and the supply of water abundant. One man started with a turning-machine, which was attached to the mill. Another, with more capital, established a fulling-mill, and so on. Joel avoided the ordinary errors of landholders. He did not attempt to carry on all sorts of business himself, neither did he hold his lots at too high prices. To actual settlers he sold cheap; to speculators he would not sell at all. The old merchant continued his friend. By his recommendation a man with sufficient capital visited the place, and, being well pleased, purchased a portion of the water-power, and built a large button-factory. Joel's views proved most judicious. By laying out the village on the ridge, he secured a beautiful site, which was relieved from a close proximity to

shops and mills and factories, while it had really the support of all these. Several fine houses were now erected. Two stores were started, and a meeting-house was built, for which Joel gave nearly all the lumber. Next a post-office was established, and the place called Burnsville.

It was a beautiful spot, and how it grew and flourished! But Burnsville would have amounted to little had it not been for Slab City. Joel took care not to lose an opportunity for strengthening *it*. Water-power could always be had of him cheap. I forgot to say that he erected a "grist-mill," which was much needed. Two other saw-mills besides his own were built, a little farther up, but on his tract. Mr. Barron and family moved to Burnsville, as Mrs. B. intimated they might. He brought a good deal of money with him, and turned his enterprise to account. The families continued intimate.

In ten years, Burnsville became one of the most prosperous villages in the state. Joel Burns was a rich man, as well as *the* man of the place. These ten years had wrought no great changes in Joel's character or habits. To be sure, he had become more engrossed in plans for future operations. By degrees he had narrowed his mind into the channel of *successful effort*. The circumference of his existence was probably more limited than when he brought his little wife into the pretty log-house on the ridge. [He now lived in the handsomest one in the village.] Still, he was more active, more perseveringly energetic, more effective, than ever before. But the romance of which I spoke had faded, or was overshadowed, by the forms of active, busy, bustling life. Still, Joel Burns was, in the main, the same ingenuous,



honest-hearted fellow as ever ; a happy man, happy in his home, happy because prosperous in his business, but by no means as happy as he might have been. Regarding him in this view, it was melancholy to see him so utterly engrossed in his pursuits and plans. He did not take time to look about him and enjoy. The Sabbath, to him, was a dull, wearisome, restless day. He had too much respect for it to desecrate it by even a private attention to his affairs, and he had very little idea of any spiritual wants. He was active in erecting a church, and securing a good preacher, on whose ministrations he attended regularly with his family. Yet it was a great relief to him when Sunday was over, and he welcomed the succeeding morning with a renewed zest.

Joel Burns became a very popular man ; he was universally beloved ; he was generous and public-spirited. He was unselfish in his ordinary dealings, and always ready to lend a helping hand to those about him. His success was not owing to a close, hard, grasping nature, but was the result of fine business abilities, coupled with extraordinary energy and perseverance.

Joel Burns was unjust to no one but himself. He neglected to cultivate his moral nature, and left it in danger of being choked by the cares he voluntarily assumed. He had one safeguard, however. I have observed that he was happy in his family. This consisted of his wife, and one child—a daughter named Sarah, after Joel's mother. When with them, Joel *did* forget his business-life. His love for his wife and child was like a gushing fountain of pure water. It preserved his heart from becoming arid, and his nature from ossification.

Twelve years passed, and found Burnsville more flourishing than ever, and Joel Burns yet without any interruption to his fortunes or his happiness.

Late in summer, typhus fever, a dreadful visitor in this part of New England, made its appearance, and became more prevalent than usual, and assumed a severer type. Mrs. Burns was among the first attacked, and with great severity.

Joel felt the foundations of his soul giving way when the possibility presented itself that his wife *might* die. He called to mind with a shudder the scene at the village tavern in Sudbury, when, a child, he stood by his mother's bedside and heard, awe-struck, her incoherent ravings while the delirium of fever was on her. "O my God! she will die, she will die!" he exclaimed, as he rushed out of the room, unable to control his feelings.

The country was scoured for doctors. An eminent medical man from New Haven was sent for. He was unable to come; but the house was filled with consulting physicians. Alas! they knew little in those days how to treat this terrible malady, or rather how to skilfully let it alone. Day after day, Joel paced up and down—now in this room, now in that—all over the house. At night he watched by his wife. He insisted on doing so; no argument or entreaty could prevail on him to leave her for a moment. She was delirious nearly all the time. Then her voice would be strong, her eyes glassy bright, her cheeks flushed and burning. She recognized neither husband nor child.

. . . . .

It was in the middle of the night. The "watcher" who

sat up in company with Joel, slumbered in his chair. *He* did not slumber, but sat with eyes fixed on his wife, who for some time seemed to be resting easier than before. Presently her lips moved. Her husband bent over her.

"Joel."

"I am here, darling."

"Joel."

"Yes, dearest."

"We have not lived right."

"No, dear."

"You do not think we have lived right, do you?"

"No! oh, no!"

"I am going to die, Joel."

"Do not speak in that way!" and the poor fellow groaned, in spite of every effort to control himself.

"I must, Joel, I must. We have not lived right. *You* will live right when I am gone. You will teach Sarah to live right, won't you?"

"I don't want to live at all if you do not live!" was the passionate answer.

"For our child's sake, Joel."

No reply.

"What a kind, loving husband you have been to me—been to me always! I loved you—loved you before you knew it, Joel."—She opened her eyes languidly, and essayed to turn them on him.—"But we have not lived right."

There was still no response, save by audible sobs.

"I think I have made my peace with God. Are you glad, Joel?"

"Now I don't care what happens, if you only feel happy!"

he cried. "But, to have you die in distress of mind!—it would drive me crazy."

"Give God the praise, Joel. I *am* happy. It is so sweet to trust in Him! You won't neglect—neglect—you won't —"

She fell into a stupor, from which she never fully awoke. Although she lived another day, she exhibited no signs of consciousness. Joel fancied that she was aware of his presence; but she never spoke again.

The funeral was attended by a large concourse of people; very different from that of Joel's mother, whom three selectmen followed to the grave. When it was over, Joel and his daughter went back to their desolate house, while the village set to work to speculate as to whom the widower would marry. "*Such* a match! *So* rich, and only one child! Emily Parks would make him a good wife; only Emily was rather old, at least twenty-seven or eight, and Mr. Burns would marry a young girl, of course. Why shouldn't he, with the amount of money he had? He might take a fancy to Julia Davis; she had just left school."—"Why shouldn't he marry Lizzie?" said Mrs. Barron to herself. And Lizzie was sent over, that very day, to "see to things" for Mr. Burns.

His trials were not ended. Sarah, who was now in her twelfth year, was taken ill the following week. The fever was no doubt going through the family, said the doctors. Joel's faith in medical men was a good deal shaken, but he had to call them in, and Sarah grew worse. Three weeks she lay, submitting to the old treatment—waiting for the "crisis." Joel could endure it no longer. He started for

New Haven, changing horses every ten miles. He found the physician he went in quest of, at home; but he said it was impossible for him to go.

"I have lost my wife, and shall lose my child!" said Joel Burns, hoarsely.

"My friend," said the doctor, in a mild tone, "people are dying everywhere. I have my own patients, whom I ought not to neglect."

"Go with me, I implore you!" urged the despairing man; "I have relays of horses, and I will drive ten miles an hour."

Joel's importunity prevailed. The distance was accomplished in a marvellously brief time.

It was a hot, sultry day, the second week of September, about noon, when Joel, accompanied by the physician, entered the sick-room.

"How is Sarah?"

"No better," whispered Miss Barron, who had remained in the house. "The doctor left half an hour ago. He says he thinks she will go as her mother went."

"I am awake, father!"—He had approached the bed very carefully, so as not to disturb her.—"It seems a great while since you went away."

"I have brought a doctor to cure you, my child," said Joel. He knew the value of hope and confidence.

Meanwhile, the physician was glancing around the room. As I have said, it was a close, sultry day; but the windows were all closed, so that not a breath of air could circulate through the apartment. The doctor quietly threw up every one of them. Perceiving a cot standing near, he ordered it

made up with fresh sheets. Going to the bedside of his little patient—"How do you feel, my child?" he asked.

"I don't know."

"Bring me a bowl of water and a soft napkin."

"Warm water, I suppose?" said the nurse.

"Cold."

He threw off the heavy blanket from the bed, and unbuttoning the night-dress, which came close around her, he bathed the child's face and neck with the grateful fluid.

"You feel better now."

"Yes," she whispered.

"Do you want any thing, my dear?"

"I want some water."

"Give her water, nurse," said the doctor.

The woman stared in utter amazement. If she had been ordered to cut the child's throat, she could not have been more astounded.

"I say, bring a tumbler of water."

This was done, and the nurse offered the patient a few drops in a teaspoon.

"Give me the glass"—and he took it out of her hand. Tenderly he raised the sick child to a comfortable position, and placed it to her lips. "Take as much as you like, my dear. Water was made to drink."

The child eagerly clutched the glass, and clung with tenacity to it till every drop was drained, and then sunk back exhausted.

The doctor now directed a complete and speedy change of garments. He then took Sarah in his arms, and laid her on the other bed. In fifteen minutes, she was sleep-

ing, while a gentle perspiration showed that the crisis had passed.

Joel Burns stood still, regarding the doctor as he would a being from another world. When he saw him doing just what was invariably prohibited—doing it with such an air of decision and confidence, yet with no peculiar ostentation—he felt that it was all right. The nurse, at first, was in very bad humor; but nobody noticed her, so she concluded it was best to be good-natured and obey orders.

The next day, little Sarah was pronounced out of danger, provided she was properly nursed; and after leaving special directions, which he charged Joel to see to personally till he could hear from him, the physician returned home as rapidly as he came.

When the man who accompanied him came back, he brought the doctor's favorite student, who had orders to devote himself to the "case," in which the doctor took so strong an interest. The good man had another motive. He believed the fever was about to attack Joel, and he determined to exert his skill to save him, if possible. To have advised him of his fears, would have been injudicious. He therefore dispatched a young man in whom he had great confidence, after giving him minute instructions.

Little Sarah, watched and tended with great care, grew better rapidly. But when the excitement produced by the scenes through which Joel had passed was at an end, a great reaction took place, which left him in a very weak state. In that condition he was seized by the terrible malady, which found a fit subject in his weakened frame and broken spirits. For weeks Joel Burns lay balancing be-

tween life and death. It seemed as if a feather's weight would turn the scale. Morning after morning, the question was put by the whole village, "Is Mr. Burns alive?" Twice, on occasions which seemed specially urgent, did the worthy doctor come from New Haven, spend a few hours, and return. The medical student kept his post manfully. It was something to go counter to the opinions and judgments of all the physicians about, far and near; especially when, if the patient should die, the voice of authority would proclaim that a murder had been committed. [Now, it would be considered murder to follow the old method.] But the doctor was firm, his pupil an enthusiastic believer in his master's genius, and the course was persisted in. At length, the daily reports were modified. First, Mr. Burns was "no worse." After that, he was "a little more comfortable." Then came the announcement that he was "better." The medical men were excessively chagrined; but everybody else rejoiced at the good news.

All this time, what of Joel Burns? How did he do? Not what was the history of his physical malady; but what was his state, mentally and morally, before God?

Recollect, the man never had a check in his whole career. The incidents of his childhood served rather to give strength and firmness to his nature. The sudden failure and death of his benefactor only threw him the more on his own resources, which were ample. His plans had been successful. His friends were many. His hopes for the future were large, yet not unreasonable; while on all sides, as we have said, he was regarded as *the* man of the community in which he lived.



Joel had little time for reflection, after the death of his wife, before his child was taken ill; and she was scarcely out of danger, when he himself was stricken down. All that long, weary time, during days and nights of fever and delirium, of exhaustion and weakness, of convalescence and recovery, the whisper of his dying wife was constantly heard:

"We have not lived right! You do not think we have lived right, do you?"

"Lived right!" What did that mean? Was Joel Burns a dishonest man? Was he not kind-hearted, generous, loving toward his wife, affectionate to his child, charitable and public-spirited?

*"Lived right!"*

Joel had answered his wife instantly—not daring then and there to soothe her by equivocation, but replying truthfully out of his soul—"No! oh, no!" What did he mean by that? Of what did he stand convicted, and wherefore?

These were the thoughts which occupied his mind, especially after the fever had left him, during the long weeks of his recovery. Joel was a man of extraordinary perceptive faculties. The situation in which he had been placed, the remarkable health which he had enjoyed (for he had never been ill in his life), and the success which had attended every plan and effort, served to still more develop his practical talents, and were at the same time unfavorable to serious thought or reflection. Now he could do nothing else but reflect and think. He looked about him. His wife was gone, and his happiness wrecked. What was he to do? Should he make haste to push on the schemes which his

sickness had brought to a stand? The idea was loathsome to him. He had seen how completely they were liable to interruption and blight. The thought of his daughter was the only comfort left: but she might be taken—then *what?*

Ah, Joel Burns! how long and wide you searched to answer that question, when the answer was so near at hand, and so easy to discover!

He did discover it at last. His wife, with her latest breath, had given him the clue. He examined himself more carefully. "What are the relations between me and my Maker? Do I recognize any?"

. . . . .

When Joel Burns rose from his sick-bed and could walk abroad, all things wore to him a new and pleasing aspect. The current of his hopes was changed. He no longer revolved around himself as a centre. He was conscious of his error before God, and sought and found "peace in believing." He now regarded all things in the light of his providence, and felt submissive to his will.

Joel was no longer indifferent to his affairs. There was so much he could do to benefit everybody! What a happy feeling, to try to be working out good for somebody all the time! When, however, he was able actively to engage in business, there was very little difference between his course of action and in what he did, and in his old course and what he used to do. The fact is, Joel *did* about what was right before. We have already related that he was kind, charitable, generous, and public-spirited. The difference, however, was, that Joel *himself* was changed. The *springs* of life and conduct were new: this is why he seemed to him-

self to be living so differently. And he *was* living differently. There was no similitude between the Joel Burns who, impelled by an active brain and an energetic purpose, was successfully prosecuting certain plans with reference solely *to* those plans, and the Joel Burns who had learned to feel that the chief *object* of existence lay above and beyond, and was centred in the Omnipotent.

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Sarah recovered rapidly from the fever; and before her father was himself convalescent, the bloom of health had returned to her cheeks. Joel's love for his child was increased tenfold. She became, as she grew up, an inseparable companion. It was evident he had no thoughts of marrying. The people of the village decided *that* at the end of a year. The widower gave none of the ordinary tokens that he was seeking a new wife; that is, he did not "brush up" any, and took no special pains with his personal appearance, but went about much as usual. It was a great pity, everybody said, for a man as young as he—hardly three-and-thirty—to live without a wife. Sarah required a motherly care over her; her father was spoiling her. Yes, it was a great pity Mr. Burns did not marry. The fact was, strange as it will seem, Joel could not forget his wife, though she was dead. A sweet and solemn link bound him to her since the night he stood over her to catch her last words, and it would appear that his affections were not to be diverted from her memory. He did not send Sarah away to school. He could not reconcile himself to her absence, but he supplied her abundantly with teachers, and personally took great pains with her education.

Two years after the death of Mrs. Burns, Joel and his daughter stood up together before the assembled church and congregation, and made a public profession of religion. It was a touching sight. And when, after the services, father and child took their way homeward, every eye followed them with looks of deepest interest and with feelings of almost universal kindness and regard. Joel had delayed presenting himself from a desire to test his feelings, having great fear of bringing reproach on the church by entering it unworthily. And now he had an increased joy that he could bring his darling into the fold with him.

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It was very natural, as she was situated, that Sarah should acquire an accurate knowledge of her father's affairs. She enjoyed listening to the story of his early life—the rise and progress of Burnsville—with explanations of his many undertakings. As she grew older, this interest took a more practical turn. She would copy letters and arrange confidential papers, and perform various services of a like nature.

Two or three years more passed. Things went on as usual at Burnsville. It is true that Joel Burns did not display that sharp faculty of acquisition which he formerly did, though he was never more active or energetic; but it was noticeable that those in his employ got on better than before, while the general prosperity of the village exceeded that of any former period.

Sarah was almost a young lady. She had grown up a beautiful girl. She possessed her father's brilliant complexion and her mother's fine form and regular features. Of course, with so much youth and beauty, and such "bril-

liant prospects" (by which, I suppose, was meant her father's death, and a large fortune to the child), Sarah already became an object of much attention. I will not say that her peculiar position did not produce something of an independent manner, which some called *hauteur*, and others exclusiveness. Part of this was owing to her education, part to the necessity of occasionally repelling the advances of conceited coxcombs. She was really a most interesting girl, with much of her father's spirit, resolution, and ability. Her affection for him was only exceeded by his for her. True, their lives were centred in each other too much. But it was very beautiful to behold.

Such was the condition of Burnsville, and such the situation of Joel Burns, when Hiram Mecker sought to remove to that place and enter his service.

## CHAPTER VII.

Mr. Burns had finished his breakfast.

A horse and wagon, as was customary at that hour, stood outside the gate. He himself was on the portico, where his daughter had followed, to give her father his parting kiss.

At that moment, Mr. Burns saw some one crossing the street toward his place. As he did not wish to be detained, he hastened down the walk, so that, if he could not escape the stranger, the person might at least understand he had prior engagements. Besides, Mr. Burns never transacted business at home, and a visitor at so early an hour must have business for an excuse.

The new-comer evidently was as anxious to reach the house before Mr. Burns left it, as the latter was to make his escape; for, pausing a moment across the way, as if to make certain, the sight of the young lady appeared to reassure him, and he walked over and laid his hand upon the gate just as Mr. Burns was attempting to pass out.

Standing on opposite sides, each with a hand upon the paling, the two met.

It would have made a good picture. Mr. Burns was at this time a little past forty, but his habit of invariable cheerfulness, his energetic manner, and his fine fresh complexion, gave him the looks of one between thirty and thirty-five.

On the contrary, although Hiram Meeker was scarcely twenty, and had never had a care nor a thought to perplex him, he at the same time possessed a certain experienced look which made you doubtful of his age. If one had said he was twenty, you would assent to the proposition; if pronounced to be thirty, you would consider it near the mark. So, standing as they did, you would perceive no great disparity in their ages.

We are apt to fancy individuals whom we have never seen, but of whom we hear as accomplishing much, older than they really are. In this instance, Hiram had pictured a person at least twenty years older than Mr. Burns appeared to be. He was quite sure there could be no mistake in the identity of the man whom he beheld descending the portico. When he saw him at close quarters, he was staggered for a moment, but for a moment only.

"It must be he," so he said to himself.

Now, Hiram had planned his visit with special reference to meeting Mr. Burns in his own house. He had two reasons for this. He thought he should find him there more at his ease, more off his guard, and in a state of mind better adapted to considering his case socially and in a friendly manner, than in the counting-room.

Again: Sarah Burns. He would have an opportunity to renew the acquaintance already begun.

There they stood. Both felt a little chagrined—Mr. Burns, that an appointment was threatened to be interrupted; and Hiram, that his plan was in danger of being foiled.

**This was for an instant only.**

Mr. Burns opened the gate, passing almost rapidly through, bowing at the same time to Hiram.

"Do you wish to see me?" he said, as he proceeded to untie the horse and get into the wagon.

"Mr. Burns, I presume?"

"Yes."

"I did wish to see you, sir, on matters of no consequence to you, but personal to myself. I can call again."

"I am going down to the paper-mill, to be absent for an hour. If you will come to my office in that time, I shall be at liberty."

Hiram had a faint hope that he would be invited to step into the house and wait. Disappointed in this, he replied, very modestly: "Perhaps you will permit me to ride with you—that is, unless some one else is going. I would like much to look about the factories."

"Certainly. Jump in." And away they drove to Slab City.

Hiram was careful to make no allusion to the subject of his mission to Burnsville. He remained modestly silent, while Mr. Burns occasionally pointed out an important building, and explained its use or object. Arriving at the paper-mill, he gave Hiram a brief direction where he might spend his time most agreeably.

"I shall be ready to return in three-quarters of an hour," he said, and disappeared inside.

"I must be careful, and make no mistakes with such a person," soliloquized Hiram, as he turned to pursue his walk. "He is quick and rapid—a word and a blow—too rapid to achieve a *great* success. It takes a man, though,



to originate and carry through all this. Every thing flourishes here, that is evident. Joel Burns ought to be richer than they say he is. He has sold too freely, and on too easy terms, I dare say. No doubt, come to get into his affairs, there will be ever so much to look after. Too much a man of action. Does not think enough. Just the place for me for two or three years."

Hiram had no time for special examination, but strolled about from point to point, so as to gain a general impression of what was going on. Five minutes before the time mentioned by Mr. Burns had elapsed, Hiram was at his post, waiting for him to come out. This little circumstance did not pass unnoticed. It elicited a single observation—"You are punctual"—to which Hiram made no reply. The drive back to the village was passed nearly in silence. Mr. Burns's mind was occupied with his affairs, and Hiram thought best not to open his own business till he could have a fair opportunity.

Mr. Burns's place for the transaction of general business was a small one-story brick building, erected expressly for the purpose, and conveniently located. There was no name on the door, but over it a pretty large sign displayed in gilt letters the word "Office," simply. Mr. Burns had some time before discovered this establishment to be a necessity, in consequence of the multitude of matters with which he was connected. He was the principal partner in the leading store in the village, where a large trade was carried on. The lumber-business was still good. He had always two or three buildings in course of erection. He owned one-half the paper-mill. In short, his interests were extensive

and various, but all snug and well regulated, and under his control. For general purposes, he spent a certain time in his office. Beyond that, he could be found at the store, at the mill, in some one of the factories, or elsewhere, as the occasion called him.

Driving up to the "office," he entered with Hiram, and, pointing the latter to a seat, took one himself, and waited to hear what our hero had to say.

Hiram opened his case, coming directly to the point. He gave a brief account of his previous education and business experience. At the mention of Benjamin Jessup's name, an ominous "Humph!" escaped Mr. Burns's lips, which Hiram was not slow to notice. He saw that his coming from his establishment would prove a disadvantage. Without attempting immediately to modify the unfavorable impression, he was careful, before he finished, to take pains to do so.

"I have thus explained to you," concluded Hiram, "that my object is to gain a full, thorough knowledge of business, with the hope of becoming, in time, a well-informed and, I trust, successful merchant."

• "And for that purpose—"

"For that purpose, I am desirous to enter your service."

"Really, I do not think there is a place vacant which would suit you, Mr. Meeker."

"It is of little consequence whether or not the place would suit me, sir; only let me have the opportunity, and I will endeavor to adapt myself to it."

"Oh, what I mean is, we have at present no situation

fitted for a young man as old and as competent as you appear to be."

"But if I were willing to undertake it?"

"You see there would be no propriety in placing you in a situation properly filled by a boy, or at least a youth. Still, I will not forget your request; and if occasion should require, you shall have the first hearing."

"I had hoped," continued Hiram, no way daunted, "that possibly you might have been disposed to take me in your private employ."

"How?"

"You have large, varied, and increasing interests. You must be severely tasked, at least at times, to properly manage all. Could I not serve you as an assistant? You would find me, I think, industrious and persevering. I bring certificates of character from the Rev. Mr. Goddard, our clergyman, and from both the deacons in our church."

This was said with a *naïve* earnestness, coupled with a diffidence apparently *so* genuine, that Mr. Burns could not but be struck by it. In fact, the idea of a general assistant had never before occurred to him. He reflected a moment, and replied:

"It is true, I have much on my hands; but one who has a great deal to do, can do a great deal. Besides, it would be impossible to devolve the duties I undertake on another."

"I wish you would give me a trial. The amount of salary would be no object. I want to learn business, and I know I can learn it of *you*."

Mr. Burns was not insensible to the compliment. His

features relaxed into a smile, but his opinion remained unchanged.

"Well," said Hiram, in a pathetic tone, "I hate to go back and meet father. He said he presumed you had forgotten him, though he remembered you when you lived in Sudbury, a young man about my age; and he told me to make an engagement with you, if it were only as errand-boy."

[O Hiram! how could that glib and ready lie come so aptly to your lips? Your father never said a word to you on the subject! It is doubtful if he knew you were going to Burnsville at all, and he had never seen Mr. Burns in his life. How carefully, Hiram, you calculated, before you resolved on this delicate method to secure your object! The risk of the falsity of the whole ever being discovered—that was very remote, and amounted to little. What you were about to say would injure no one—wrong no one. If not true, it might well be true. Oh! but, Hiram, do you not see that you are permitting an element of falsehood to creep in and leaven your nature? You are exhibiting an utter disregard of circumstances in your determination to carry your point. Heretofore, though you have looked to but one end—self—you have committed no overt act. Have a care, Hiram! Satan is gaining on you.]

Mr. Burns, at first sight, had not been agreeably impressed with his visitor. Magnetically, he was repelled by him. He was too just a man to allow this to influence him, in word or action. He permitted Hiram to accompany him to the mill, and return with him.

During this time, the latter had learned something of his

man. He saw quickly enough that he had failed to impress Mr. Burns favorably. Determining not to lose the day, he assumed great ingenuousness of manner, coupled with much simplicity and earnestness. He appealed to the certificates of his minister and the deacons, as if these would be sure to settle the question, irrespective of Mr. Burns's wants; and at last the *lie* slipped from his mouth, in appearance as innocently as truth from the lips of an angel.

At the mention of Sudbury and the time when he was a young man, Hiram, who watched narrowly, thought he could perceive a slight quickening in the eye of Mr. Burns—nothing more.

His only reply, however, to the appeal, was to ask—

"How old are you?"

"Nineteen," said Hiram, softly. [He would be twenty the following week, but he did not say so.]

"Only nineteen!" exclaimed Mr. Burns; "I took you for five-and-twenty."

"It is very singular," replied Hiram, mournfully. "I am not aware that persons generally think me older than I am."

"Oh, I presume not; and now that I look closer, I do not think you *do* appear more than nineteen."

It was really astonishing how his countenance had changed—how every trace of shrewd, keen apprehension had vanished, leaving only the appearance of a highly intelligent and interesting, but almost diffident youth!

Mr. Burns sat without speaking. Hiram did not dare utter a word. He knew he was dealing with a man quick in his impressions and rapid to decide. He had done his best, and would not venture farther.

Mr. Burns, looking up from a reflective posture, cast his eyes on Hiram. The latter appeared so exceedingly distressed, that Mr. Burns's feelings were touched.

"Is your mother living?" he asked.

Hiram was on the point of denying the fact, but that would have been too much.

"Oh! yes, sir," he replied.

Again Mr. Burns was silent. Again Hiram calculated the chances, and would not venture to interrupt him.

This time Mr. Burns's thoughts took another direction. It occurred to him that he had of late overtaken his daughter. "True, it is a great source of pleasure for us both that she can be of so much assistance to me, but her duties naturally accumulate; she is doing too much. It is not appropriate."

So thought Mr. Burns while Hiram Meeker sat waiting for a decision.

"It is true," continued Mr. Burns to himself, "I ought to have a private clerk. The idea occurred even to this youth. I will investigate who and what he is, and will give him a trial if all is right."

He turned toward Hiram:

"Young man, I am inclined to favor your request. But if I give you employment in my *office*, your relations with me will necessarily be confidential, and the situation will be one of trust and confidence. I must make careful inquiries."

"Certainly, sir," replied Hiram, drawing a long breath, for he saw the victory was won. "I will leave these certificates, which will aid you in your inquiries. I was born

and brought up in Hampton, and you will have no difficulty in finding persons who know my parents and me. When shall I call again, sir?"

"In a week."

. . . . .  
 "Gained! gained!" exclaimed Hiram aloud, when he had walked a sufficient distance from the office to enable him to do so without danger of being overheard. "A close shave, though! If he had said 'No,' this last time, all Hampton would not have moved him. What a splendid place for me! How did I come to be smart enough to suggest such a thing to him? I rather think three years here will make me all right for New York."

Hiram walked to the hotel, and ordered dinner. While it was getting ready, he strolled over the village. He was in hopes, by some accident, to meet Miss Burns.

He was not disappointed. Turning a corner, he came suddenly on Sarah, who had run out for a call on a friend.

Now, Hiram fancied he had produced a decided impression the evening they met at Mrs. Croft's; and, with a slight fluttering at the heart, he was about to stop and extend his hand, when Miss Burns, hardly appearing to recognize him, only bowed slightly and passed on her way.

"You shall pay for this, young lady," muttered Hiram, between his teeth—"you shall pay for this, or my name is not Hiram Meeker! I would come here now for nothing else but to pull *her* down!" continued he, savagely. "I will let her know whom she has to deal with."

He walked back to the hotel in a state of great irritation. With the sight of a good dinner, however, this was in a

degree dispelled, and, before he finished it, his philosophy came to his relief.

"Time—time—it takes time. The fact is, I shall like the girl all the better for her playing *off* at first. Shan't forget it, though—not quite!"

He drove back to Hampton that afternoon. His feelings were placid and complacent, as usual. He had asked the Lord in the morning to "prosper his journey and to grant him success in his undertaking," and he now returned thanks for this new mark of God's grace and favor.

Mr. Burns did not inquire of the Rev. Mr. Goddard, nor of either of the deacons mentioned by Hiram. He wrote direct to Thaddeus Smith, whom he knew, and who he thought would be able to give a correct account of Hiram. Informing Mr. Smith that the young man had applied to him for a situation of considerable trust, he asked for his careful judgment about Hiram's capacity, integrity, and general character. As there could be but one opinion on the subject in all Hampton, Mr. Smith returned an answer every way favorable. It is true he did not like Hiram himself; but, if called on for a reason, he could not have told why. As we have recorded, every one spoke well of him. Every one said how good, and moral, and smart he was; and honest Mr. Smith reported accordingly.

"Well, well," said Mr. Burns, "if Smith gives such an account of him while he has been all the time in an opposition store, he must be all right. . . . Don't like his looks, though . . . wonder what it is?"



When, at the expiration of the week, Hiram went to receive an answer from Mr. Burns, he did not attempt to find him at his house. He was careful to call at the office at the hour he was certain to be in.

"I hear a good account of you, Meeker," said Mr. Burns, "and in that respect every thing is satisfactory. Had I not given you so much encouragement, I should still hesitate about making a new department. However, we will try it."

"I am very thankful to you, sir. As I said, I want to learn business, and the compensation is no object."

"But it *is* an object with me. I can have no one in my service who is not fully paid. Your position should entitle you to a liberal salary. If you cannot earn it, you cannot fill the place."

"Then I shall try to earn it, I assure you," replied Hiram, "and will leave the matter entirely with you. I have brought you a line from my father," he continued, and he handed Mr. Burns a letter.

It contained a request, prepared at Hiram's suggestion, that Mr. Burns would admit him in his family. The other ran his eye hastily over it. A slight frown contracted his brow.

"Impossible!" he exclaimed. "My domestic arrangements will not permit of such a thing. Quite impossible."

"So I told father, but he said it would do no harm to write. He did not think you would be offended."

"Offended! certainly not."

"Perhaps," continued Hiram, "you will be kind enough to recommend a good place to me. I should wish to reside in a religious family, where no other boarders are taken."

The desire was a proper one, but Hiram's tone did not have the ring of the true metal. It grated on Mr. Burns's moral nerves; a little of his first aversion came back, but he suppressed it, and promised to endeavor to think of a place which should meet the young man's wishes.

It was now Saturday. It was understood that Hiram should commence his duties the following Monday. This arranged, he took leave of his employer, and returned home.

That evening Mr. Burns told his daughter that he was about to relieve her from the drudgery, daily increasing, of copying letters and taking care of so many papers, by employing a confidential clerk. Sarah at first was grieved; but when her father declared he should talk with her just as ever about every thing he did or proposed to do, and that he thought in the end the new clerk would be a great relief to him, she was content.

"But whom have you got, father" (she always called him "father"), "for so important a situation?"

"His name is Meeker—Hiram Meeker—a young man very highly recommended to me from Hampton."

"I wonder if it was not he whom I met last Saturday!"

"Possibly; he called on me that day. Do you know him?"

"I presume it is the same person I saw at Mrs. Croft's some weeks since. Last Saturday a young man met me, and almost stopped, as if to speak. I did not recognize him, although I could not well avoid bowing. Now I feel quite sure it was Mr. Meeker."

"Very likely."

"Well, I do hope he will prove faithful and efficient. I recollect every one spoke highly of him."

"I dare say."

Mr. Burns was in a reverie. Certain thoughts were passing through his mind—painful, unhappy thoughts—thoughts which had never before visited him.

"Sarah, how old are you?"

"Why, father, what a question!"

She came and sat on his knee, and looked fondly into his eyes. "What *can* you be thinking of, not to remember I am seventeen?"

"Of course I remember it, dear child," replied Mr. Burns, tenderly; "my mind was wandering, and I spoke without reflection."

"But you were thinking of me?"

"Perhaps."

He kissed her, and rose and walked slowly up and down the room. Still he was troubled.

We shall not at present endeavor to penetrate his thoughts; nor is it just now to our purpose to present them to the reader.

Hiram Meeker had been again *successful*. He had resolved to enter the service of Mr. Burns, and he *had* entered it. He came over Monday morning early, and put up at the hotel. In three or four days he secured just the kind of boarding-place he was in search of. A very respectable widow lady, with two grown-up daughters, after consulting with Mr. Burns, did not object to receive him as a member of her family.

## CHAPTER VIII.

HIRAM entered on his new duties, I was about to say with zeal and activity; but such are not the words I would employ to describe his conduct or character: rather earnestness and fidelity. Neither do these terms precisely convey my meaning, but none better occur to me. He was quiet and unobtrusive, at the same time alert and ready. Absolutely negative in his manner, he did not leave a salient point for Mr. Burns to lay hold of. His first object was to learn exactly the situation of his employer's affairs, and that without manifesting the least curiosity on the subject.

Of course, such an event as the introduction of a young man into Mr. Burns's private office was soon known all over town. The appearance of the new-comer was scrutinized, and every word and gesture watched. This Hiram knew very well, and bore himself accordingly. Wherever he went—whether on business to Slab City with Mr. Burns's horse and wagon, or to the store, or about the village—he had the careful, considerate air of one who is charged with affairs of the greatest importance.

Do not think Hiram was so foolish as to assume a consequential air—not he. His manner appeared quite involuntary; produced necessarily by the grave matters he had in charge. He was by no means reserved. He was always

ready to enter into conversation, and to answer questions, provided the questions did not refer to his employer's business. Thus he soon gained the reputation in Burnsville which he had in Hampton, of being a very agreeable young man.

At first, his presence rather puzzled the good people, and some would inquire of him what he was "hired for." His answer was ready and explicit: "To act as confidential clerk for Mr. Burns." This would be pronounced in a tone so decided, that while it stimulated the curiosity of the inquirer, it checked further questioning.

In this way, without appearing conceited, arrogant, or consequential, our hero managed to impress everybody with the importance and responsibility of his position. Wherever he appeared, folks would say, "There goes Meeker." As Mr. Burns's representative, he was noticed more than Mr. Burns himself. Hiram knew very well how to manage this, and he did so to perfection.

It would have done you good to see him on Sunday, elaborately dressed, going to church with the Widow Hawkins on his arm, followed by the two Misses Hawkins. Walking up the aisle, his countenance composed and serious, he would open the pew-door and wait reverently for Mrs. H. and the young ladies to pass in. They, "the young ladies," would flutter along and enter the pew with a pleased, satisfied air—they were already in love with Hiram—and, after the usual turnings and twistings and adjustments, take their seats; the one next our hero giving him a little bit of a smile or a brief whisper ere she settled down into the ordinary church decorum.

Hiram all the while would not move a muscle. He never cast his eyes around the congregation; he never looked anywhere except at the clergyman, to whom he paid profound attention. When the services were over, he escorted Mrs. Hawkins back to her house, while the young ladies sometimes stopped to say a few words to their companions.

In a fortnight, Hiram had taken a class in the Sunday-school, of which Mr. Burns was superintendent, and on the next communion Sabbath he joined the church by letter.

For some time Hiram confined himself in the office to following implicitly the instructions of Mr. Burns, without venturing to ask any questions or make any suggestions. He carried out these instructions to the letter. He wrote a beautiful hand; and he was, as the reader knows, an admirable accountant.

For several days Mr. Burns seemed disposed to ascertain his capabilities, by putting a variety of matters into his hands. He gave him a contract to copy, and then asked for an abstract of it. He submitted several long accounts to him for arrangement. He sent him to the mill or factory, sometimes to deliver a message simply, sometimes to look after a matter of consequence. Mr. Burns found Hiram on all these occasions to be intelligent, accurate, and prompt. He invariably manifested this single characteristic, to wit, undivided attention to the matter in hand.

"He is an invaluable fellow, I declare," said Mr. Burns to himself. "I wish I could feel differently toward him. Strange how a prejudice will stick to one!"

"I think I am gaining ground," soliloquized Hiram. "Let

him try me; the more the better. I shall do him good, in spite of himself."

During this period, which we may term Hiram's novitiate, he had been careful, without appearing to avoid her, not to come in contact with Sarah Burns. Mr. Burns was a very hospitable man, but he had not asked Hiram to visit him. The latter was not slow to perceive and appreciate the neglect. He did not mind it much, though. He had gained his position, and felt that he could take care of himself.

Meantime, Sarah frequently inquired of her father how he liked his new clerk. At first, as we have stated, she felt jealous that any one should share his business confidences with her, but soon she resigned herself to this; and learning who was to enter her father's service, she hoped that she would find an agreeable acquaintance in the young man with whom—if the truth be told—she was really much pleased when they met at Mrs. Croft's. We have already described the wrath of young Meeker at receiving, as he supposed, the cut direct from Sarah Burns the first day he visited the place. Sarah, entirely unconscious of having given offence, began to wonder how it happened that she never encountered him on any occasion. They attended the same church; each had a class in the Sunday-school; they met in the lecture-room, but never where an opportunity was afforded for them to speak.

At last, one Sunday, after he had finished with his class, Hiram started to go to the library, to procure some books for his pupils, and perceived, when it was too late, that Miss

Burns herself was making choice of some. Another moment, and Hiram was close at her side, but intent on his selections.

"He is diffident," said Sarah to herself, "and thinks I do not recognize him because I did not when we met so unexpectedly. It is proper I should speak to him."

"How do you do, Mr. Meeker?" she said.

Hiram looked up with well-feigned surprise.

"Very well, I thank you," he replied, with polite formality; "I hope you are quite well;" and, barely waiting for her bow of assent, he busied himself with the books again.

"How he *has* altered! What can be the matter with him?" thought Sarah, as she turned to resume her place.

"Pretty well for encounter number two," muttered Hiram, as he walked back to his class. "Wait a little, young lady, and we will see who comes off second best!"

Louisa and Charlotte Hawkins were both very pretty girls. Their mother, now several years a widow, was an estimable lady, who had by no means lost her good looks. Possessing excellent health, she made a very youthful appearance, and seemed more like an elder sister than the mother of her daughters. Her husband left her a moderate income, which an unforeseen occurrence had the last season diminished. It was this circumstance which induced her to listen to Hiram's application to become a member of her family. His recommendations were so ample, what Mr. Burns said about him was so satisfactory, and the price which Hiram volunteered to pay for his accommodations so



generous, that Mrs. Hawkins found it impossible to refuse him. I will not say that Hiram's manner and address did not serve to turn the scale. The widow was gratified with the extraordinary deference paid to her, with which was mingled a species of admiration; while the young ladies—who were, of course, brought into the consultation—were somehow & verally impressed with the idea that Hiram must be perfectly charming in a private *tête-à-tête* with ~~Mary~~ and sister out of the room.

Hiram's plan with the ladies was, literally, to divide and conquer. Mrs. Hawkins had too much good sense to take matters seriously, but she could not help being flattered by the assiduous and persevering attentions of so young and handsome a fellow. In fact, she looked five years younger herself after Hiram came to her house. These attentions, however, were not out of the common course. They were apparently just what it was eminently proper and polite to render; but we have already explained that Hiram had a delicate and most insinuating way of giving force and meaning to them.

Ah! well, after all, we would not intimate that the widow Hawkins, now forty years of age, ever entertained any other thought toward Hiram than that he would make a most delightful son-in-law; or if she did experience feelings which people take for granted belong only to the young (people are much mistaken), it is not for me to betray or expose them.

But the young ladies, Miss Louisa and Miss Charlotte. Here was a more difficult task to render equal justice to each. Candidly, however, I think Hiram accomplished it.

Louisa was already one-and-twenty; but her glossy, dark hair, which she wore in curls down her neck, served to give her a very youthful appearance. Charlotte, who was nearly two years younger than her sister, was always taken by strangers for the eldest. She was a blonde, and wore her light-brown hair plain over her face. Both these young ladies soon had their private impression that there were peculiar confidences between them and Hiram. It was the old story again. Our hero had lost none of his powers of fascination in removing from Hampton to Burnsville.

You see, reader, how pleasantly Hiram was quartered. I do not suppose that a thought of Mary Jessup ever entered his brain (to say nothing of his heart, if he had any) after he came to Mrs. Hawkins's. He attended to his business devotedly, and never in a single instance sacrificed it to his pleasure, his comfort, or his inclinations. When it was finished, he turned for solace and enjoyment to the society of these ladies, much as he would to his dinner, though with a keener zest.

After his encounter with Miss Burns at the Sunday-school, Hiram no longer avoided her. Still, he confined himself to courteous salutations, in which he appeared perfectly at ease and unrestrained, without getting into conversation or alluding to a previous acquaintance.

Pray, understand, if Sarah Burns had had the slightest idea that Hiram's course was premeditated, she would have cut his acquaintance instantaneously, for she was a girl of spirit, with a touch of her father's impetuosity of character. As it was, she imagined every reason for Hiram's reserve but the right one, and so was anxious he should do away with

it. To this end, she always returned his greeting in a manner calculated to give him confidence if he were diffident, and courage if he were timid. It seemed to little purpose. "What can be the matter with the fellow?" she said to herself. She was piqued; she was puzzled; she felt annoyed.

Young ladies must excuse me for letting the public into some of their secrets; but, as a faithful historian, I am forced to record precisely how Sarah Burns felt, as well as just what she did, during the early part of her acquaintance with my hero—an acquaintance which led, as the reader may remember, to an engagement of marriage.

Meantime, Hiram began to gain in Mr. Burns's regard. He soon discovered how very capable his new clerk was. He certainly never had any such person in his employment before. He found himself, by degrees, leaving many things for Hiram to attend to which he supposed no one but himself was capable of transacting. In such cases he was astonished with what facility Hiram performed the work; how apt and ready he was. What a comfort for a man with as much on his hands as Mr. Burns, to have such an assistant!

Yet, with all his readiness, and capability, and actual value to his employer, he was *not* a comfort to him. Despite all, Hiram's presence cast a shadow across the *soul* of Mr. Burns. While he approved of every thing he did—while he appreciated his extraordinary business abilities—while he could not but be satisfied and pleased with his competency, his assiduity, and his untiring devotion,—the quick, sensitive nature of this truthful, genuine man felt

magnetically the malign force which was working in the brain of the subtle and calculating schemer. . . . .

It was remarked after a while, about the village, that Hiram never visited. It was soon understood, though, what a moral, pious youth he was. The Rev. Mr. Baker said he never conversed with a young person whose religious experience was so interesting, and who manifested such implicit trust in Providence.

. . . . .

Hiram was quick-witted enough to perceive that his situation with Mr. Burns was enough of itself to give him a prominent position in the village. The girls were crazy to be introduced to him; and one young lady, who had hitherto held out against it, took a class in Sunday-school, so as to make young Meeker's acquaintance at the meetings of the teachers.

I have said Hiram never visited: I will tell you why. So long as he made *no* visits, it would not appear singular that he did not call at Mr. Burns's; otherwise his omission to do so would certainly attract attention. True, Hiram did not, perhaps, require an invitation to justify his going to see Miss Burns, but he resolved that he would not go without one. He was careful, however, that not a soul should know he felt slighted, and this led him to spend his time at home, and devote himself to the widow Hawkins and her daughters. It is true he soon made the acquaintance of the whole church. He enjoyed some very pleasant seasons with the young ladies at the various gatherings connected with it. He was rallied on his being so much of a recluse. Arch hints were conveyed that doubtless his home

was specially agreeable. Was it Louisa or Charlotte? Both these young people would simper and look conscious when they were attacked on the subject; for both candidly believed they were liable to the innuendoes. . . . .

Thus matters went on during the first six months of Hiram's career at Burnsville. In that time he managed to make himself fully acquainted with Mr. Burns's affairs. In fact, he knew more about them, with reference to value and availability, than did Mr. Burns himself. For with the latter, life possessed higher objects than the mere acquisition of property; while with Hiram it was *the* great earthly good, and not a thought or a fancy entered his brain which was not subservient to it.

We can see how very useful such a person would be to Mr. Burns. Indeed, after a while he found himself listening to occasional suggestions which Hiram modestly put forth about this or that matter.

The liberal terms allowed to every one in his service was a matter of great annoyance to the confidential clerk. But here he touched a vital principle in Mr. Burns's course of action, which was, to regard all who served him as entitled to share, according to their usefulness, in the benefits of the business or enterprise in which they were engaged. The result was, that their wages or salaries were on a generous scale. A further result appeared in the pleasing aspect of the village, betokening a more diffused prosperity than is ordinarily observed.

Now, Hiram had early mastered the doctrine of making the many contribute to the success and fortunes of the few. It had already become one of his cardinal ideas. The reader

will recollect that about the first thing which impressed our hero on coming to Burnsville, was the fact that Mr. Burns was not as rich as he ought to be, considering the facilities he had to make money. Here was a point beyond Hiram Mecker's comprehension. Turn it whichever way he would, he failed to understand Mr. Burns in this.

You see, Hiram could have no more idea of his employer's humanizing views than a blind man of colors. He could not attribute it to lack of sagacity, for he saw such abundant proofs as compelled his admiration and respect. It did not appear to grow out of any strict religious theories; for Mr. Burns held mere professions in such low esteem, that he never *spoke* of an act or of a course as dictated or regulated by a sense of duty, so called. Since his wife died, he had tried to obey her dying injunction, "to live right," which he soon discovered had reference to the state of his heart, and thus to his motives, while his actions were such as would naturally flow from such a condition of the "inner man." Hiram, on the other hand, practised on the philosophical principle of "means to ends." He had two ends in view, namely: to be SUCCESSFUL here, and to be SUCCESSFUL hereafter. He was determined to omit nothing which could further these ends. But since these, as we have before stated, had no reference to or connection with any thing except *self*, the reader will readily see how Hiram failed to understand Mr. Burns.

On other points there was no difficulty. On his part, Mr. Burns could not help being struck with the clear, rapid, comprehensive business mind of the young man. Despite his prejudices, Hiram advanced daily in his confidence.

## CHAPTER IX.

THERE was one matter, and that an important one, in Mr. Burns's affairs, which was going wrong. I refer to the paper-mill. Mr. Burns had undertaken the enterprise in connection with an excellent man, an old friend and an extensive paper-dealer, residing in New York. Each furnished half the capital for the erection of the mill and for the machinery, and they were, therefore, joint owners of the property. The season after it went into operation, his friend failed, and felt himself obliged, without having time to consult Mr. Burns, to convey his portion of the mill to a Mr. Joslin—Mr. Elihu Joslin—one of the largest paper-merchants in the city, to whom he owed a heavy confidential debt. This Joslin was a rich man, and very unscrupulous—such was his reputation with the trade. Not a few thought he was the means of forcing his brother-merchant into bankruptcy, having first lent him considerable sums of money on a pledge that it should be regarded as confidential in any event.

In this way Elihu Joslin came to be owner of one-half the paper-mill with Joel Burns. At the first interview, every thing passed pleasantly between the two. Joslin was planning how to get the other in his power, and so finally possess the whole of the property. It was arranged, as was

very proper, that Mr. Joslin should act as merchant for the mill, as his predecessor had done. He was to purchase and forward rags from which to manufacture paper, and receive on consignment all paper produced at the mill. He sounded Mr. Burns on his own wants, and was disappointed to find him in no need of money.

On the rendering of the first account, Mr. Burns was much chagrined at the state of things which it discovered. True, every thing was correct on paper. Rags were entered at the market price; consignments, when sold, were properly credited. But there were charges for all sorts of commissions—for accepting, and paying, and accepting again—a variety of entries hitherto unheard of in ordinary dealings, and never made by the previous correspondent of Mr. Burns, which were positively startling. Mr. Burns remonstrated by letter. It did not do the least good. He was dealing with a bold, daring, unscrupulous man, who, in the language of his acquaintances, always practised the grab-game.

Mr. Burns finally made the best settlement of the account in his power, determining, before another six months passed, that he would make a change of some sort. Unfortunately, he was at that time rather short of money; for he was expending considerable sums in other enterprises, and supposed the paper-mill could not fail to take care of itself. So he continued to send forward to Mr. Joslin his consignments, and to draw on him as usual. The next rendering of accounts showed affairs in a sad plight. Paper was very dull, so Joslin wrote. The lots sent forward were not as good as usual (which was a falsehood), so that much that



had been sold was returned to him (another lie), and he had been forced to sell the most of it at auction to cover his advances; and the bills for the last cargo of rags still remained unpaid.

Mr. Burns was thunderstruck. He saw that he had fallen into the hands of a knave; but what was to be done? The idea of going to New York to obtain satisfaction, and thus encounter the scoundrel on his own ground, was not pleasant; but what else could be done? He decided, after some reflection, as he could not just then leave the place, to send the superintendent of the mill to Mr. Joslin for the purpose of investigating the account, and all the circumstances connected with the business. He prepared a strong letter to Joslin, in which he spoke with great severity of the course he had pursued.

At this juncture, Hiram was taken into the consultation. He begged Mr. Burns to write no letter, but to send any message he chose. "The man will accomplish nothing," he rather curtly added; "still, it is well enough to send him." Mr. Burns thought Hiram's suggestion a prudent one; so the head man of the paper-mill was dispatched, with verbal instructions. He returned in three days, very well satisfied with his journey. He had been received by Mr. Elihu Joslin with the utmost politeness. The latter expressed entire willingness to go over the account and correct any mistakes in it. Indeed, he had succeeded in convincing Mr. Joslin of one error of thirty-one dollars and twenty-six cents, which was at once made right. As to the main points at issue, however, Mr. Joslin could not alter the amount. There were the advances, here the sales; there the charges, here

the credits. As to the commissions for buying, for selling, and guaranteeing, for accepting and re-accepting, as well as the charges for storage and insurance and drayage, and for re-packing, why, let him consult the very first houses in the city—the *very* first. He would leave it to Mr. Burns to select the house, and abide by its decision.

The man came back to Burnsville completely bamboozled. Hiram was present in Mr. Burns's office when his report was made. Mr. Burns received it in silence. He saw how his messenger had been overreached.

When the latter left the office, he remarked, half to himself—

“This is an unfortunate business.”

“I want to ask an especial favor of you,” said Hiram.

“What is it?”

“I want you to permit me to go to New York, and try what I can do.”

“Have you any plan?”

“I cannot say I have; it would depend on circumstances.”

“Have you confidence in achieving something?”

“I have sufficient to wish to make the attempt.

“You shall go.”

“I would like to start to-morrow.”

“Very well; come to my house after tea, and we will look over the papers.”

“I am much obliged to you, sir.”

Mr. Burns started to leave the office; he opened the door and was half out; then he turned.

“By-the-way, Meeker, come and take tea with me; we will then be ready to go at once into the accounts.”

"Thank you, sir."

The door closed, and Hiram was left alone. What a moment of triumph!

"Invited to the house at last! I knew I should fetch it. Let us see . . . very good . . . now, young lady . . ."

The murmurings finally became inaudible, as Hiram rose and walked up and down the room, stopping occasionally, and then starting rapidly on.

Mr. Burns proceeded homeward, quite unconscious of the excitement he had raised in Hiram's breast. Always considerate and just, it occurred to him, since he had requested the young man to come to his house on business, thus breaking over his usual rule, that he ought to ask him to tea, and accordingly he did so. He announced the fact to Sarah as he entered. He was too much preoccupied to observe a slight flush rise to her cheeks as he spoke. She, however, only replied—

"Any thing unusual, father?"

"Yes; Stevens has returned from New York, accomplishing nothing. I am going to send Meeker. We are to look over matters this evening."

"Indeed! Do you believe he can do any better than Stevens?"

"Yes, I think so. Besides, he wants to go; he volunteered to go."

"Is it possible?"

"Why not, my child?"

"I am sure I don't know; it seems strange."

"Perhaps it does; but I confess I have a great deal of confidence that he will bring something about."

That evening the appearance of the table was slightly changed—not enough to attract Mr. Burns's attention, but there was a greater display of silver than usual, and a nicer regard to arrangement. The same might be said of Sarah herself. The casual observer would not notice it, one of her own sex would.

One minute past the appointed time Master Hiram arrived, direct from the office, where he had been so immersed in accounts, head and hands so full of business, as almost to forget the tea-hour.

Yes, he came direct from the office. But previously he had stepped to his room, and, without "dressing up," or apparently disturbing the usual arrangement of his wardrobe, managed to make himself especially presentable. In short, he had done just what Sarah Burns had done.

I wish you could have witnessed the meeting between them. You would have thought Hiram in the habit of going all his life to the house, instead of entering it for the first time. No forwardness, though—no assumption; yet entire freedom from awkwardness or embarrassment.

Sarah, on her part, received him with a pleasant, lady-like greeting—quite unconscious, as we have already intimated, of having given Hiram any cause of offence.

Various topics were discussed: the condition of the Sunday-school; the health of the clergyman; the high water at Slab City; the lecture of the celebrated Charles Benjamin Bruce; the prospects of the Lyceum; the new town-hall.

Mr. Burns said but little. It was very unusual to see him engrossed with any business matter to the exclusion

of social enjoyments. *Was* he thinking of business altogether? Occasionally and unconsciously his eye would glance from his daughter to Hiram, and then back. Little did he know, little could he guess, what was passing in that crafty, scheming brain—else . . . . .

Mr. Burns was called out for a few moments just as tea was concluded.

"So," exclaimed Sarah, suddenly, "you are going to New York?"

"How do you know that?" returned Hiram.

"How do I know it? Are you not aware that I know every thing going on? I was very jealous of you at first."

"Of me?"

"Yes, for depriving me of my situation."

"You speak in riddles."

"Did you not know *I* was father's 'confidential clerk' before you cut me out?"

"Indeed, I did not. If I had, I should never have presumed to offer my services."

"I suppose it was well you did. Some time I will tell you what I used to do. But father talks to me about every thing just as ever. Oh! I hope you *can* do something with that Mr. Joslin. Do you think you can?"

"I hope so; I shall try, and—" (he hesitated, looked down, and blushed—consummate actor that he was)—"and all the harder now that I find *you* take such an interest in it."

"Oh! thank you," replied Sarah.

[There was the slightest perceptible *hauteur* in her tone, and the slightest perceptible drawing in from her previous pleasant, free manner—only the slightest.]

"For," continued Hiram, lifting his eyes, and looking at her boldly, as if not noticing the remark, "if you take so much interest in my mission, you will be forced to feel some sort of interest in me."

"If you *succeed*, why, I will say yes," replied Sarah, with entire good humor. "If you do not—"

"I accept the alternative," interrupted Hiram, "but do not forget your pledge."

Here Mr. Burns came in, and the two proceeded at once to business. He did not see Sarah again.

It was at a late hour that Hiram left the house. With Mr. Burns's aid he had mastered the whole subject, accounts and all. He was happy. Once, as he walked along, he turned and cast his eyes up to the window. I do not like to think of the look which flitted across his face. He nodded significantly, and went on his way.

Louisa Hawkins opened the door for him the moment he put his foot on the step.

"Where *have* you been?" she whispered; "I was so frightened! I persuaded *them* to go to bed. Did you think I would be waiting for you?"

"I was sure of it, Lou."

"You *were*, weren't you?"

They went in and sat half an hour in the parlor together. But Hiram gave her no inkling of where he passed the evening.

The next day our hero started for New York. Of his adventures there, and the result of his interview with Elihu Joslin, we will speak in another chapter.

## CHAPTER X.

## DIAMOND CUT—PASTE.

ELIHU JOSLIN belonged to that class of knaves who are cowardly as well as unscrupulous. He never hesitated to cheat where he had an opportunity, trusting to his powers of blustering and browbeating to sustain him. When these failed—that is, when he encountered persons who were not imposed on nor intimidated by his swaggering, bullying mien—he showed his craven nature by an abject submission. From being an errand-boy in an old-established paper-house in the city, he had become the proprietor of a large business in the same line. He had but a single idea—to make money. And he did make it. His reputation among the trade was bad. But this did not, as it ought to have done, place him beyond the pale of business negotiations. Every merchant knows that there are many rich men in business, whose acts of dishonesty and whose tricks form a subject of conversation and anecdote with their associates in trade, yet who are not only tolerated, but are by some actually courted. Joslin, when quite a young man, had been the assignee of his employer, who hoped to find in him a pliant tool. He soon found his mistake. He had put himself completely in the power of his clerk, and the latter

took full advantage of it. The result was, his principal was beggared, and Joslin rose on his ruins.

It was a favorite practice with Joslin to discover men who were short of money, lend them what they wanted, and thus, after a while, get control of all they possessed. When Joslin first met Mr. Burns, he hoped to entangle him as he had his friend. But the former was too good a merchant and in too sound a position to be brought in this way into his toils. He was therefore obliged to have recourse to sheer knavery to compass his object. The fact of Mr. Burns living so far from the city, the great expense which would be entailed on him by a litigation, and the natural repugnance he thought Mr. Burns would have to a lawsuit, emboldened him to employ the most high-handed measures to cheat him.

Mr. Burns's paper had become well known in the market, and commanded a ready sale. The manufacture was even, and the texture firm and hard. There was a continually increasing demand for it. Joslin determined on, even for him, some audacious strokes. He sent a lot of the paper to an obscure auctioneer, one of his tools, and had it bid off in the name of a young man in his store. He thereupon reported the entire consignment to be unsalable, and credited Mr. Burns with the whole lot at the auction-prices, less expenses. In this way he claimed to have no funds when Mr. Burns's drafts became due, and called on the latter for the ready money. The previous consignment he pretended to have sold in the city, at a time when paper was much lower than usual, but he had returned for this the then market price. Really, he had not sold the paper at all. Knowing that it



was about to rise, he simply reported a sale, and kept the paper on hand to take advantage of the market, and he was now selling it at an advance of ten per cent. on the previous rates.

Mr. Burns had never before encountered so desperate a knave. As we have said, the affair troubled him greatly. He was determined to investigate it thoroughly, but he could not well afford the time to go himself to New York. His chief man at the paper-mill had failed to accomplish any thing; so it was a great relief when Hiram volunteered his services. Mr. Burns could not tell why, but he had a singular confidence that Hiram would bring the matter out right.

He was up to see his confidential clerk off in the stage, which passed through Burnsville before daylight, and which was to call at the office for its passenger. From that office a light could be seen glimmering as early as three o'clock. Hiram, after an hour or two in bed, where he did not close his eyes, had risen, and, taking his valise in his hand, had gone to the office, and was again deep in the accounts. He would make memorandums from time to time, and at last wrote a brief note to Mr. Burns, asking him to send forward by the first mail a full power of attorney.

At length the stage-horn was heard. Hiram rose, opened his valise, and placed his papers within it. The stage wheeled rapidly round the corner, and drew up at the office-door; Hiram extinguished the light, seized his valise, stepped quietly out, and was in the act of turning the key—he had a duplicate—when Mr. Burns arrived.

“I thought,” he said, “I would see you off. You will

have a fine day, and reach New Haven in ample time for the boat."

"I have left a brief note on your table," responded Hiram, "to ask for a power of attorney. I think it may be important."

"You shall have it. Good luck to you. Write me how you get along. Good-by."

He shook Hiram's hand with an enthusiasm which belonged to his nature. The latter extended his cold, dry palm to his employer, and said, "Good-morning, sir," and got inside. He did not in the least enter into Mr. Burns's cheerful, sympathizing spirit. If the truth must be told, he had not the slightest sympathy for him; neither did any desire to extricate him from this awkward business induce the present adventure. He cared no more for Mr. Burns than he did for Mr. Joslin. But he did enjoy the idea of meeting that knave, and circumventing him. It was the pleasantest "duty" he had ever undertaken. On it his whole thoughts were centred. What did he care whether the day was fair or foul—whether the roads were good or bad? He longed to get to work at Joslin.

The stage-door closed, and the vehicle rolled swiftly away. Mr. Burns stood a moment looking after it. He had felt the entire absence of responsive sympathy in his clerk, and his old feeling returned, as it invariably did at times. He walked slowly toward his house.

"Why is it that I so often wish I was rid of that fellow, when he serves me so effectually?"

Mr. Burns turned before entering, and cast his eyes over the horizon. The light was just streaking the sky from the

east. Joel Burns paused, and directed his glance over the town—the town he had founded and made to flourish. Tears stood in his eyes. Wherefore? He was thinking of the time when, after Mr. Bellows's death, he had, step by step, carefully travelled over this locality, while laying plans for his future career. Here—just here—he had marked four trees to indicate the site for his house, and here he had built it.

“O, Sarah, why had you to leave me?”

The words, uttered audibly, recalled him to himself. He opened and passed through the gate, and stepped on the piazza.

“Is that you, father?”

It was his daughter's voice. He looked up and saw her at the window. “I heard you go out, and I have been watching for you ever since. Did Mr. Mecker go?”

“Yes.”

“Wait, father, and I will come down and take a walk with you. Wouldn't you like it?”

“Yes, dear, very much.”

They walked on together in silence. Presently Sarah perceived they were going in the direction of the burying-ground. Mr. Burns entered it with his daughter, and soon stood by his wife's grave.

“She left us early, my child. You do not forget her?”

“Oh, no, father!”

“Do you remember all about her—*all*?”

“Yes, every thing.”

“I know it—I know you do. Why is it, Sarah, that lately I feel more solitary than usual?”

"Do you, father?"

"Yes, since—" He paused, unwilling, it would seem, to finish the sentence.

"You know, father, I have not been quite so much with you since Mr. Meeker came. You are more in the office."

"So I am. I wish—" He hesitated again. Evidently something oppressed him.

Just then the first slanting rays of the morning sun gleamed over the place—pleasant rays, which seemed to change the current of Mr. Burns's thoughts, lighting up his soul as they were lighting the universe.

He spoke cheerfully: "Let us run home, now. And, Sarah, won't you see that we have a very nice breakfast? Early rising has given me an appetite."

## CHAPTER XI.

ALL this time the stage was conveying Hiram Mecker toward his goal—toward Elihu Joslin. He reached New Haven in time for the boat, and early the following morning was in New York. At this date the town had not assumed its present magnificent proportions. Broadway, above Canal street, was lined with private residences instead of stores, and Bleecker street was one of the most fashionable in the city. Nevertheless it was already imposing, especially to a young man from the country.

Hiram had visited New York on two several occasions when a boy, in company with his mother, but latterly had not found any opportunity to do so. Landing from the boat, he made his way to the then leading hotel, "The Franklin House," and entered his name, and presently went in to breakfast. After he had finished, he stepped out on the sidewalk. He beheld a continuous stream of human beings pouring along this extraordinary thoroughfare. Omnibuses, carts, wagons, and vehicles of every description, already filled the way.

Hiram stood and regarded the scene. "What a field here!" he said to himself. "Look at this mass of people. Every other man an idiot—and of the rest, not one in a thousand has more than a medium share of brains. What

a field, indeed, to undertake to manage and direct and control these fellows! What machinery, though! Not too fast. This is the place for me! Burnsville—pho! Now, friend Joslin!” . . . .

Hiram made his way to the store of H. Bennett & Co., in Pearl street. Mr. Bennett was in; glad to see Hiram, but wonderfully busy. He invited his relative to dinner—indeed, asked him why he had not come direct to his house. Then he turned away to business.

This did not fluster Hiram in the slightest. He waited a few minutes; then took occasion to interrupt Mr. Bennett, and say he wished to speak with him on a matter of importance.

“Certainly,” replied the other. “What can I do for you?”

“I come to New York on special business,” said Hiram. “It is necessary I should know just what kind of a person Elihu Joslin is—the large paper-dealer in Nassau street. I have not your facilities for ascertaining, and I ask you, as a particular favor, to find out for me.”

“Joslin!” exclaimed Mr. Bennett. “I hope none of your people are in his clutches. He is a hard case to deal with, so they say.”

“Is he rich?”

“Yes, worth a couple of hundred thousand, easy.”

“How does he stand with the trade?”

“Oh, unpopular enough, I should imagine. Can’t tell you particularly—is not in my line, you know; but if the matter is really pressing, you shall learn all you wish to in an hour.”

"Thank you. I must know all about him prior to a personal interview, which I am to have."

"I see. Call in at twelve o'clock, and the information will be ready for you."

"One word more. Do you know the house of Orris & Tweed, auctioneers?"

"Orris & Tweed? Never heard their name before."

"It is in the directory."

"I dare say. That don't amount to any thing."

"Please let me know something of them, too. I am sorry to give you this trouble; but I am a greenhorn in New York, and have a difficult matter on my hands."

"No trouble—at least, I don't count it such to help a friend in the way of business. Besides, if you are a greenhorn, you act as if you knew what you are about."

H. Bennett, of the prosperous house of Bennett & Co., would not have devoted five minutes extra to his namesake in the way of social chat; regarding such conduct in business hours, and in the busy season, as worse than superfluous; but as a matter of business, though purely incidental and profitless, he would have given the whole day to Hiram's affair, if absolutely necessary.

Mr. Bennett here gave some special directions to one of his numerous clerks—a sharp, active-looking fellow, with a keen eye and an air like a game-cock—who vanished as soon as they were received.

Hiram left the store, and, turning into Wall street, walked on till he reached Nassau street, in which was the establishment of Elihu Joslin. He strolled on without any special purpose, till his attention was arrested by an obstruction on

the sidewalk. It was simply the ordinary circumstance of the delivery of goods. In this instance a dray was backed up to the curbstone, loaded with paper. Hiram looked at it carefully. It was of Mr. Burns's manufacture. He glanced up to see the name of the house. It was not Joslin.

A new thought flashed on him. Actuated by it, he commenced to speak with the carman, but checked himself, and walked boldly into the store, and back to the counting-room.

"I see you have Burns's paper. I want to purchase a small quantity of it."

"We couldn't supply you, to-day—have just got this in to fill an order. His paper stands so high, that it is scarce in the market. How much do you want? We may get some more in by Thursday."

"Only a few reams, to make out an assortment. I suppose I can buy of you on as good terms as of Joslin."

"For a small lot, I think, better. I have this direct from him, which is the same thing as if sent from the mill. You know the manufacturers will sell only to jobbers. You are in the retail line, I presume?"

"I am; and I wish you would spare me a couple of reams out of this lot, and send them round to H. Bennett & Co.'s, Pearl street."

The merchant recognized in Hiram a young country storekeeper; and desirous, as all merchants are, to make new acquaintances, was willing to accommodate him. H. Bennett & Co. was a first-class name, and this decided him to break into the lot, which was already sold to somebody else.



Hiram paid for his purchase, called up a carman *instantly*, and never took his eye off the paper till it was delivered at Mr. Bennett's store.

That gentleman was standing at the door, saying good-by to a first-rate customer, when Hiram came up with his cart, and directed his two reams of paper to be deposited inside.

"Well, youngster, what's all this?" said Mr. Bennett, good-humoredly.

"A little speculation of mine," quoth Hiram, quietly.

"Well, men do sometimes buy their own *paper*, I know—that is, when there is a promise to pay written on it; but this is a blank lot."

"It will prove a prize to me, unless I am mistaken."

Mr. Bennett caught the general idea on the instant. The two exchanged looks, such as are only current between very 'cute, knowing, sharp-witted men. Hiram was betrayed into returning Mr. Bennett's leer before he was aware of it. It was a spontaneous recognition, and he felt ashamed at being thus thrown off his guard. He colored slightly, and said something about his duty to his employer.

"There's where you're right," replied Mr. Bennett. "A man who does not serve his employer well, will not serve himself well in the long run; that you may be sure of."

The conversation ended here. Hiram strolled out again for half an hour; and when he returned, Mr. Bennett was able to give him a daguerreotype of Elihu Joslin's character, which agreed with that with which we have already favored the reader. As to "Orris & Tweed, auctioneers," they were not much better than Peter Funks—lived by acting as stool-pigeons and cheating generally.

Hiram left the store rejoicing at this intelligence, and took his way direct to Joslin's place. Inquiring if that personage was in, he was told yes, but specially engaged. Hiram sat for a full hour, waiting patiently: then he was told to go into the private counting-room.

Entering, he beheld a large, overgrown, rough-looking man, about five-and-thirty, with black hair and eyes, and a coarse, florid complexion, who looked up and nodded carelessly on his entrance.

"This is Mr. Joslin, I presume?"

"Yes."

"My name is Meeker. I come from Burnsville; am in the employ of Mr. Burns."

"Well?"

"I have come down to take a look at York; and knowing you owned half the paper-mill, guessed you was a friend of Mr. Burns, and might not object to let some of your folks show me about a little."

"You don't belong in the mill, then?"

"No; but I've been all over it. It's curious work, paper-making."

"How long are you going to stay here?"

"Well, I want to make a little visit, and see the place. In fact, I've a notion to come here by-and-by, and I would like to look about first. Don't you want a clerk yourself?"

"What can you do?"

"I can tend store first rate."

"What do you want to leave Burns for?"

"I didn't say I wanted to leave him. He's a first-rate

man, if he was only a little sharper—got too many soft spots: that's what I hear folks say. But I think I should like New York."

"Well, Nicker—"

"Meeker, if you please."

"All right, I say, Meeker; we are pretty busy now, but if you want to see the elephant—and I suppose you do—I will introduce you to one of my boys, who will give you a chance."

He stepped out, beckoning Hiram to follow.

"Hill!—Tell Hill to come here, some of you.—Hill, this is Mr. Meeker, in the employ of our particular friend, Mr. Burns, of Burnsville. He wants to see something of the city. You must do what you can for him. I would not wish to slight any one, you know, who belongs with Mr. Burns."

"All right, sir," said Hill, a jaunty, devil-may-care looking fellow, with a sallow, sickly face, evidently the result of excess and dissipation. "If the young gentleman will tell me where he stops, I will call for him this evening."

"At the Franklin House," responded Hiram.

"The devil!" exclaimed Joslin. "Tall quarters, I should say."

"Ain't it a good place, sir? I was told it was a good house on board the boat."

"Good! I should think it was. The best in New York. A dollar and a half a day: did you understand that?"

"No, sir; I did not ask the price."

"Green, that's a fact," said Joslin to himself. "Never mind," he continued—"Hill will recommend you to his

boarding-place, if you like. Good-day;" and Hiram took his leave.

"I say, Hill, I want to find out how matters stand with Burns. You've got just the chance now. Put this chap through generally; his mother don't know he's out. Don't mind a few dollars: you understand? Pump him dry."

"Dry as a sandbank," said Hill, who was already chuckling over the sport in prospect.

Mr. Joslin continued his instructions, which, as they were of a strictly private nature, we should be violating confidence to record.

Hiram occupied himself the remainder of the day in looking about the town. He took one of Brower's Broadway omnibuses and rode to the end of the route, opposite Bond street. Here he descended and retraced his steps. Broadway was then the general promenade. Hiram's pulse beat quick as he gazed on the beauty and fashion of the metropolis moving magnificently along. Susceptible as he was, he had never before been so impressed with female charms. He thought of the belles of Hampton and Burnsville with a species of disgust. His own costume, which he had regarded as so perfect, he perceived had a provincial, country look, when contrasted with that of the gentlemen he encountered. Now, in business matters, Hiram was as much at home and as self-possessed in New York as in Connecticut; but when it came to the display he now beheld, he felt and acknowledged his inferiority.

Here Hiram *was* green. He did not stop to reflect that fine feathers make fine birds, so suddenly was he confronted with the glittering panorama. He continued to mingle with

the crowd which swept along; and sometimes the blood would rush swiftly to his brain, causing him to reel, as dark eyes would be turned languidly on him—exhibiting, as he was ready to believe, an incipient interest in his destiny.

Below Canal street the character of the current began to change, till gradually Hiram was freed from the exciting trial he had been subjected to. He collected his thoughts, and brought his mind back to his work—and his work Hiram Meeker never neglected. Slowly the old current drove out the new; gradually his mind returned to its even tenor. He walked through the custom-house. He entered the exchange. He visited the shipping; and when he got back to the hotel, he was tired and hungry enough. But, tired and hungry as he was, he proceeded at once to open his valise and take out a bundle of papers. Glancing over certain account-sales, his eye fell on the name of HILL as purchaser. A peculiar gleam of satisfaction passed over his face as he replaced the papers in his valise, and went down to dinner.

## CHAPTER XII.

At the appointed hour, the young gentleman whom Mr. Joslin had addressed as "Hill" waited on Hiram at the Franklin House. He sent up his card, and Hiram descended to meet him. He could scarcely recognize the young man before him, dressed in a ridiculous extreme of fashion, and covered with rings, pins, and gold chains, as the clerk with coat off, hard at work superintending the stowing away of a lot of merchandise. But Hiram was in no way taken in or deceived by the imposing manner in which Mr. Hill had got himself up. He saw quickly the difference between the real and the flash fashionable. But he did not betray this by word or sign, and continued to maintain the character he had assumed, of an unsophisticated, verdant country youth.

Mr. Hill at the outset proposed that they should take a drink, to which Hiram readily assented. They proceeded to the bar, when the young man asked his companion what he would have.

"A glass of lemonade," replied Hiram.

"Lemonade!" exclaimed the other. "You don't call that drinking with a fellow, do you?"

"I can't take any thing stronger," answered Hiram. "I belong to the temperance society."

"Temperance society!" retorted Hill, a good deal chaf-fallen that he was to lose his chief weapon of attack. "I thought the pledge didn't hold when you were away from home."

"Oh, yes it does; our minister says it holds everywhere. Still, I wouldn't mind taking some soda and sarsaparilla, though Dr. Stevens says there's alcohol in the sarsaparilla."

Hiram was impracticable. Hill could not induce him even to take a little wine. He was so much chagrined, that he poured out for himself a double portion of brandy, and, before he had finished it, regained his good-humor.

"Well, what do you say to another glass? I think I can stand the brandy, if you can the lemonade."

Hiram had no objections.

Hill lighted a cigar. Hiram did not smoke.

"I hope you are not going to refuse my next invitation," said Hill. "I have got tickets for the theatre: what do you say?"

Hiram had often discussed the theatre question, both at the lyceum and on other occasions. It was to be condemned—no doubt about it. But the Rev. Mr. Goddard had once remarked, in his hearing, that he thought if a good opportunity was presented for a young man to visit the theatre, he had perhaps better do so once, than feel an irritating curiosity all his life about it.

Seeing Hiram hesitate, Hill proceeded to urge him.

"You had better go," he said. "Lots to be seen. You don't know what you are losing, I tell you."

Hiram was not influenced by his companion's importunity; but he decided to go, nevertheless. The elder Kean

was then in New York, and the old Park Theatre in all its glory. That evening Kean was to play Shylock in the "Merchant of Venice." Hill, greatly pleased that at last he had made some headway, took another glass of brandy-and-water, and the young men proceeded to the theatre.

The house was crowded from galleries to pit. The orchestra was playing when they entered. Hiram was blinded by the brilliancy of the gaslights. His heart beat fast in spite of his effort to be composed.

The play began with some second-rate actors, who went through the first scene with the usual affected stage strut and tone. Hiram thought he never witnessed any thing more unnatural and ridiculous. Even in the second scene, where Portia and Nerissa hold a dialogue, he was rather disgusted than otherwise.

The machinery had scarcely been adjusted for the third scene, when a storm of applause burst from all parts of the house; clapping of hands, stamping of feet, bravos, and various noises of welcome, commingled; and Hiram beheld an old man enter, somewhat bent, dressed in a Hebrew cap and tunic, and having a short cane, which might serve either for support or as a means of defence. As he advanced, he cast sidelong, suspicious, and sinister glances from beneath bushy, beetling eyebrows.

At first, Hiram was inclined to believe it was a real personage, so natural was his entrance—so destitute of all trick, or of any thing got up.

"That's Kean," whispered Hill.

Hiram held his breath as the words of the Jew broke distinctly on the house:



*"Three thousand ducats—well."*

He entered at once with the deepest interest into the play. With head leaning forward, eyes open wide and fixed on the speaker, he drank in every word. From the first, he sympathized with the main character. When Shylock went on to say—"Yet his means are in supposition: he hath an argosy bound to Tripolis, another to the Indies. I understand, moreover, upon the Rialto, he hath a third at Mexico, a fourth for England; and other ventures he hath, squandered abroad. But ships are but boards, sailors but men. There be land-rats and water-rats, land-thieves and water-thieves—I mean pirates; and there is the peril of waters, winds, and rocks. The man is, notwithstanding, sufficient"—Hiram unconsciously shook his head, as if he doubted it.

His whole soul was now centred in the performance. When it came to the trial, in the fourth act, he turned and twisted his body, as if he could with difficulty abstain from advising Shylock to accept the offer of Bassanio: "For the three thousand ducats here is six."

It does not appear that Hiram felt any sympathy for the merchant who was to lose the pound of flesh; but for Shylock, when turned out of court, stripped of all he had, it was intense. When, at last, he exclaims—

"Nay, take my life and all; pardon not that:  
You take my house when you do take the prop  
That doth sustain my house; you take my life  
When you do take the means whereby I live"—

Hiram leaned back, and exclaimed audibly, "It's too bad, I declare!"

All this time, Hill sat as quietly as he could. He laughed whenever Launcelot Gobbo appeared; and tried hard to get Hiram to go out and take more lemonade, between the acts. Hiram would not move. He offered to introduce him to lots of pretty girls whom he pointed out in the distance; but it was useless. Hill began to think he would not make much of Hiram, after all. The evening was past, and he had as yet accomplished just nothing.

The play was over. The farce had been performed. It did not interest Hiram; he thought every thing overstrained and unnatural. It was now late. Hiram had declined various seductive invitations of Hill, when the latter finally insisted that they should have some oysters. Hiram assented, and the two descended into Windust's.

"Well, old fellow, what are you doing here?" was Hill's exclamation to a young man with notebook and pencil, seated at one of the small tables, on which already smoked an oyster-stew and some brandy-toddy.

"Hallo, Hill, is that you? Sit down. What will you have?" was the reply.

Hiram regarded the speaker curiously. He was twenty-two or three years old—serious looking, with long, black hair, dark eyes, and pale, bony features. He had the easy, indifferent air of one careless of opinion, or independent of it.

"My friend Mr. Meeker, from Connecticut."

"Mr. Meeker, Mr. Innis."

After these salutations the parties sat down, and orders were given.

"Excuse me," said Innis; "I am not quite through my work."

"Go ahead," replied Hill; whereat the other proceeded with his pencil and notebook, scratching away in a most rapid manner.

Seeing Hiram look as if he did not exactly comprehend the employment, Hill remarked: "Innis is *item* man and reporter for the *Clarion*, and you will see his notice of Kent's performance, which he is just finishing, in to-morrow morning's paper."

This struck Hiram as rapid work, considerably increasing his respect for the stranger, and led him to regard Innis still more critically. His appearance had impressed him favorably from the first.

Suddenly he exclaimed, "Weren't you at Newton Institute?"

"Yes; and so were you. I remember, now. You were a little fellow. You took the first prize in book-keeping."

"And *you* learned short-hand of Chellis."

"Which counts now, at any rate. I should starve without it."

During this colloquy, Hill sat in utter amazement.

"You a Newton boy?" he exclaimed, at last.

"Yes," said Hiram.

"And you know him, and no mistake?" to Innis.

Innis nodded.

"Then old Joslin may go to the devil! I—"

"He'll go soon enough, and without your permission; and if you are not careful, you'll go with him," interrupted Innis, rising. "I am all right now," he continued. "I've but to step a block and a half and back. I will be with you again in three minutes."

And he darted off to hand in his evening's report.

Hill sat looking at Hiram, who, with all his impenetrability, wore a surprised and puzzled expression.

"You don't remember me?" he said.

"No."

"Why, I am Deacon Hill's son, of Newton. I quit the academy, I guess, just about the time you came. Innis and I were there together. Well, I declare, your innocent look threw me off the track; but I have seen you many a time in Hampton. You used to be with Jessup, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"You've been coming 'possum over Joslin; isn't it so?"

"I don't understand you."

"Oh, never mind; he's a cursed knave, anyway. I shall quit him first of January—keeps me on promises and the lowest kind of a salary, and no end of the dirty work—"

"Such as sham sales of my employer's paper, sold A. H. Hill," interrupted Hiram, dryly.

"Hallo! where did you get hold of that?" said Hill, laughing.

Hiram made no reply; and Innis entering at this moment, the subject was changed.

Hill, who had already imbibed more than was good for him, ordered a brandy-toddy; and Hiram, true to his temperance principles, partook of a cup of hot coffee. Before the toddy was half finished, Hill, who was already illustrating the proverb, that "children, fools, and drunken men speak truth," commenced again about his employer.

"Really, Mr. Hill, I don't think you ought to refer to your confidential relations with your principal," said Hiram,

gravely. He knew, cunning fellow, that it would only be adding fuel to the fire.

"You be ——!" said Hill. "I tell you what it is, Innis, here's a sell. I'm fairly come over. He is on Joslin's track—I know it, and I'll own up." He thereupon proceeded to give a general account of Joslin, and how he did business; and what a cowardly, lying, dishonest knave he was.

Innis laughed. Hiram was quiet, but he did not miss a word. The little supper was finished, and the trio rose to depart.

"I had no idea it was so late," said Innis.

"Have you far to go?" said Hiram.

"Yes, to Chelsea; and the omnibuses have stopped."

"Come and stay with me: I have a very nice room."

Innis saw that Hiram was in earnest, and after a little hesitation he assented. Hill bade them good-night, and hic-coughed off toward his own quarters; and Hiram with Innis went to the Franklin House.

When these young men reached their room, they did not go to bed. They sat up for an hour or two. What this conference led to we shall see by-and-by.

## CHAPTER XIII.

HIRAM rose early, notwithstanding the late hours of the previous night. Innis breakfasted with him, and then took his departure. On going to the post-office, Hiram found a letter from Mr. Burns, enclosing a full power of attorney, as he had requested. He then went to H. Bennett & Co., where he took up at least an hour of that gentleman's time, apparently quite to that gentleman's satisfaction. Thence Hiram proceeded to the office of a well-known counsellor-at-law, who had been recommended to him by Mr. Bennett.

The day was spent in preparing certain ominous-looking documents. I am told that, on the occasion, Hiram exhibited a breadth and clearness of comprehension which astonished the counsellor, who could not help suggesting to the young man that he would make an excellent lawyer, which compliment Hiram received with something very like a sneer. That evening Hiram went to bed early. He slept well. His plans were perfected—his troops in order of battle, only waiting for the signal to be given.

He awoke about sunrise, and rang his bell. A sleepy servant at length replied to it.

"Bring me a *Clarion*," said Hiram.

"The papers won't be along, sir, for half an hour."

"Well, let me have one the moment they come. Here's

a quarter; bring a *Clarion* quick, and I shall ask no change."

I record this instance of an impatient spirit in Hiram, as probably the last he ever exhibited through his whole life. What could cause it?

Presently the waiter came back. The *Clarion* was in his hand. Hiram took it eagerly, turned swiftly to the "City Items," and nodded with intense satisfaction as his eye rested on one paragraph.

At ten o'clock precisely, Hiram presented himself at the counting-room of Elihu Joslin. Again he was forced to wait some time, and again he waited most patiently.

[I ought to state that Hill, in order to keep up his credit with his employer—his bravado being sensibly cooled the following morning—had made up all sorts of stories about Mr. Burns's affairs, which, as he reported, had been pumped from Hiram, whom he professed to have left in a most dilapidated state at the hotel.]

At length, Mr. Joslin would see Hiram. The latter entered and sat down.

"Well, my young friend," said the merchant, "what do you think of New York? Equal to Burnsville, eh? Did Hill do the polite thing by you?"

"Mr. Joslin," said Hiram, seriously, and quite in his natural manner, while he fixed his quiet but searching eyes on him, "I have an important communication to make to you."

"Well?"

"I am not what I appear to be!"

"No? What the devil are you, then?"

"I am the CONFIDENTIAL CLERK of Joel Burns, sent here by him to ferret out and punish your rascalities! Stay," continued Hiram, perceiving that Joslin was about to break forth in some violent demonstrations. "Sit down, sir, and hear me through quietly. It is your best course; it is your ONLY course. Now listen. You have undertaken to cheat my employer. You have rendered false accounts of sales, using your own clerks for sham purchasers, and employing stool-pigeon auctioneers. You have attempted to swindle him generally. I have the whole story here. *You are in my power!*"

"By ——! that's more than I'll stand," shouted Joslin, "from any d——d Connecticut Yankee!"

"Stop!" said Hiram, authoritatively. "A word more, and you are ruined past all redemption! Read that"—and he handed him the *Clarion*, placing his finger on a particular paragraph. Joslin took the paper; his hand trembled, but he managed to read as follows:

"Some extraordinary disclosures have reached us, involving a wholesale paper-house in Nassau street in large swindling transactions. We forbear to give the name of the party implicated, but understand that the police are already in possession of the facts."

"Here," said Hiram, showing a bundle of papers, "are the documents. Outside there on the curbstone stands an officer. I mean to make short work of it. Will you behave rationally or not?"

Joslin sat down.

"What do you want?" he said, at length.

"I want nothing but what is HONEST, sir—that I mean to have," said Hiram, in a mild but very firm tone. "Here is



the account as it ought to be rendered. Look it over, and put your name to it."

"Really, this will take time—a good deal of time," said Joslin, recovering from his stupor. "I must consult my book-keeper."

"You will consult nobody, and you will settle this account before I leave the room!"

Joslin took the document. He trembled from head to foot; he saw himself circumvented.

Hiram proceeded to show him just how the account ought to stand. Very coolly and accurately he went through the whole.

"I suppose you are right," said Joslin, moodily, and he affixed his signature to the paper, and began to think he was getting off easy. "Now, do you want any thing more of me?"

"Yes," said Hiram, "considerably more. You own one-half of the paper-mill with Mr. Burns. You must sell out to him. Here is an agreement to sell, drawn ready for your signature."

"D——d if I will do it, for all Burnsville! You've settled with me, and you can't stir a peg further. Outwitted yourself this time!" said Joslin, triumphantly.

"Not quite so fast. *You* have settled with Mr. Burns by signing that paper, which gives the lie to your other accounts, and is so much evidence for me before a police-court; but Mr. Burns has *not* settled with you, and *won't* settle with you, till you bind yourself, by signing this document, to sell out to him, on reasonable terms."

Joslin was again struck dumb.

"You will receive," continued Hiram, "just what you paid for it, less my expenses, and charges for my time and trouble in coming to New York, counsel-fees, and so forth; and you may think yourself fortunate in falling into conscientious hands!"

Not to pursue the interview further, Hiram accomplished just exactly what he undertook to do, before he entered Joslin's store that morning. The accounts were made right, and Hiram turned to leave the store, with the agreement to sell in his pocket. He stopped before going out.

"Mark you," he said—"when Joel Burns gets a clean deed of your half the paper-mill, according to this agreement, I will tear up these little documents"—exhibiting some law-papers. "Don't forget. You have undertaken to settle with me. I shan't have settled with you till I get the deed. Good-morning!"

It was only twelve o'clock when all this was concluded. Hiram marched out of the store triumphant. His impulse on touching the pavement was to jump up and down, run, kick up his heels, and shout all sorts of huzzas. He did none of these, but walked up to the Park very quietly, and then into Broadway. But his heart beat exultantly. A glow of absolute satisfaction suffused his mental, moral, and physical system. It was just the happiest moment of his life. The day was fine—the air clear and bracing. Broadway was filled to overflowing. How he enjoyed the promenade!

It was when turning to retrace his steps, after reaching the limits of fashionable resort, that his feelings became so buoyant that it seemed as if he must find some outlet for

them. The exquisite beauty of the ladies, the richness of their dresses, and the air and style with which they glided along, put new excitement into his soul.

"One of these days I shall make their acquaintance. Oh, what a place this is!" he muttered.

Unconsciously he stopped quite still, almost in an ecstasy.

At that moment his attention was attracted by a hearse, which, having accomplished its task, was proceeding at a rapid rate up Broadway. Careening from one side to the other, it jolted swiftly over the pavement. The driver, either hardened by habit, or, it may be, a little tipsy, exhibited a rollicking, reckless air, as he urged his horse along. As he came opposite Hiram, their eyes met. Influenced by I know not what—perhaps for a joke, perhaps to give the young fellow who was so verdantly staring at him a start—he half checked the animal, as if about to pull up, and, gesturing to Hiram in the style of an omnibus-driver, motioned him to get inside!

Never before, never afterward, did Hiram Meeker receive such a shock. Dismay was so evident on his face, that the man gave vent to a coarse laugh at the success of his experiment, applied the lash to his brute, and dashed furiously on.

What sent that hearse along just then and there? It gave you a ghostly reminder, Hiram. It made you recollect that you were not to lose sight of the other side.

That morning Hiram forgot, yes, *forgot* to say his prayers. So entirely was he carried away by the Joslin business, that for once he neglected this invariable duty. This was not singular under the circumstances. To a genuine spirit the

omission would have been followed by no morbid recollections. As Hiram, after the affair of the hearse, took his way to the hotel, the fact that he had not sought God's blessing on his morning's work suddenly presented itself. He was persuaded that the shock he received was providential. Arrived at the Franklin, he mounted to his room, and read three or four times the customary amount in the Bible, and prayed longer and more energetically than he ever did before in his life. He was now much more calm, but still a good deal depressed. It was not till after he had partaken of an excellent dinner that he felt entire equanimity.

That evening Hiram was to spend at Mr. Bennett's. True to his rule, which he applied with severity, not to let pleasure interfere with business, he had declined all his cousin's invitations. Now he was at liberty to go and enjoy himself. Mr. Bennett lived in a very handsome house in a fashionable street. His daughters were older than Hiram, but still they were very pretty, and by no means *passée*. Mrs. Bennett was quite a grand lady. Mr. B. received Hiram very cordially, and asked immediately how he had got along. Hiram replied briefly. Mr. B. was delighted. Mrs. B. received Hiram very graciously, but with something of a patronizing manner, very different from what she exhibited when spending several weeks at Hampton. The two girls were more cordial. Hiram's country-bred politeness, which omitted not the least point required by books of etiquette, amused them much as the vigorous and scientific dancing of a country belle amuses the city-bred girl who walks languidly through the measure. Notwithstanding, Hiram managed to make himself agreeable. It was

not till two or three young gentlemen came in, that they showed slight signs of weariness, and Hiram was transferred to mamma.

Our hero was not slow to perceive the disadvantage under which he labored. He was not one whit discouraged. He watched his rivals closely. He smiled occasionally in disdain while listening to some of the conversation. "They are fools," he said to himself. "The tailor has done the whole. Never mind, I can afford to wait."

The next day Hiram took the boat for New Haven, and on the following morning reached Burnsville. He had written but a line to Mr. Burns, to acknowledge the receipt of the power of attorney, and had given his employer no inkling of what he was attempting to do.

As the stage, a little after sunrise, drove into that beautiful village, Hiram felt glad to get back to its quiet, charming repose. He thought of the glare and bustle and excitement of New York with no satisfaction, contrasted with the placid beauty of the scene he now witnessed. The idea of being welcomed by Louisa and Charlotte Hawkins filled his mind with pleasure, and Sarah Burns did not at that moment suffer in comparison with the Miss Bennetts.

"It is a happy spot!" said Hiram. "Can I do better than stay in it?"

It was an instinct of his better nature which spoke. He had given way to it for a moment, but *only* for a moment. The next, the old sense returned, and was triumphant.

The stage whirled on, and soon Hiram was driven up to the house of Mrs. Hawkins. How rejoiced they all were to

see him! The widow Hawkins had missed him so much! As for Louisa and Charlotte, they were ready to devour him.

Hiram hurried through his breakfast, hastily adjusted his toilet, and walked over to Mr. Burns's house. He rang the bell. The door was opened by Mr. Burns himself. He greeted Hiram most cordially.

"I did not expect you back so soon. Come in; we are just sitting down to breakfast."

"I have already breakfasted," said Hiram, "and am going to the office. Please look these papers over," he continued. "By them you will see precisely what I have been able to do."

Mr. Burns took the papers, and turned to go in. He thought Hiram had accomplished little, and he did not wish to mortify him by asking what.

Just then Sarah Burns came tripping down-stairs, and, passing her father, extended her hand to Hiram, and said:

"Welcome back! What have you done?"

"Do not forget your promise," replied Hiram, in a low but distinct tone. "I have won!"

## CHAPTER XIV.

"Love descends." To be filial is a virtue. But who calls parental affection a virtue? "Honor thy father and thy mother." It is commanded from Sinai. "Love and cherish thy children." Where do we find so needless an injunction?

The idea *is* a melancholy one, that as we grow old, and more than ever require sympathy, our children, in the inevitable course of nature, become interested in their own surroundings, and less able to sympathize with us.

Joel Burns was not, in the ordinary sense, growing old. He was in the very flush and prime of manhood. I have explained with what feeling and affection he regarded his child, and how she regarded him.

For Joel Burns is coming the hour of agony and trial.

Reader, do not blame his daughter. Could she oppose the *vis naturæ*? Could she, if she would, battle against that subtle and irresistible *leaven* which now began to pervade her being? Indeed, she could not. And how unconscious she was! How much more than ever she loved her father, as she thought! Perhaps she did. For when a young girl first feels her soul charged with this mysterious influence, how kindly and joyously and lovingly all are embraced—father, mother, brothers, sisters, friends!

Sarah had only her father; and when her heart began to fructify and expand, all her affections expanded with it. Not that her heart had, as yet, any object to rest on. By no means. But the *time* had come. There was no resisting it, any more than resistance may be predicated of the green leaf, which *must* put forth in the spring, bringing bud and flower and fruit after it.

I repeat, Sarah Burns was unconscious—actually and absolutely unconscious. Do not suppose that she cared specially about Hiram Meeker. She did not. Her nature only was on the alert, not she. Hiram, all things considered, was the most agreeable man she had met, and why should she not be attracted by him—to an extent? I say attracted—I do not mean any thing else. Why should she not be?

Joel Burns, I cannot help pitying you. There is no living being with whom you can intimately sympathize, except your daughter—*her* child, on whom the affluence of your heart has all been shed. You feel instinctively the real state of things. And you quite understand it. You knew it was to be. But you hoped, not quite so soon—not *quite* so soon.

Perhaps, reader, I may not echo your own sentiments, when I speak of Joel Burns. But I love a genuine nature, such as his. I admire honesty of *soul*—that honesty which will not think of itself nor seek to have others think of it different from what it really is.

Yes, I feel sorry for Joel Burns.

. . . . .

Mr. Burns, as I have already observed, took the papers which Hiram put in his hands, in the belief that they con-



tained little to satisfy or encourage him. While his confidential clerk was absent, he had permitted his mind to dwell on the "unfortunate affair" more than was his habit in relation to any matter of business. This, however, was assuming such ugly proportions, that he could not avoid it. Sarah also could not help talking about it. So that Hiram's arrival served to terminate a suspense which had become painful.

Sarah Burns, after receiving Hiram's response to her question (she thought and cared only for the single word "won"), ran joyfully into the room to congratulate her father, and get full particulars. She was surprised to find him seated at the breakfast-table, the bundle of papers untouched, while his countenance certainly gave no indication that he had just received agreeable intelligence.

"Why, father, how grave you look! What is the matter?"

"I did not know that I looked specially grave. I suppose I am a little disappointed at Meeker's returning so soon. I find, without knowing it, that I had calculated too much on his efforts."

"Has he told you what he has done?"

"No. He merely handed me these papers, and said they explained all. I saw by his countenance, however, that he had accomplished nothing of consequence. [The fact is, Hiram, desiring to make the surprise as complete as possible, did exhibit the air of one returning from an unsuccessful mission.] So let us enjoy our breakfast before I go again into this miserable business."

"Now, to please me, father, just take a peep at the papers; perhaps it is better than you think."

Mr. Burns shook his head.

"Oh, please do," and she put the bundle in his hand.

Mr. Burns untied the string.

"What have we here? '*Joel Burns vs. Elihu Joslin.*' The fellow has involved me in a lawsuit, to begin with. I had better have agreed to the account—much better," he added, almost pettishly. "I ought to have gone myself, at any sacrifice."

Sarah had unconsciously taken the papers from her father's hand, and was turning them over. Hiram's assurance still rang in her ears.

"Here is something, father," handing him a document marked "*Account current*,"—"and here something else," exhibiting another, endorsed "*Elihu Joslin with Joel Burns—Agreement to sell Paper-Mill.*"

Mr. Burns took both, and was instantly engaged in ascertaining their contents. Sarah stood by, waiting, and I must say confidently waiting, the result.

Mr. Burns's mind was, as the reader knows, rapid in its movements. He comprehended the *account* at a glance; then he looked at Joslin's agreement to sell. That was brief and to the point. Mr. Burns read every word of it.

"It is not possible!" he exclaimed, as he finished the perusal. "I declare I can't think it possible."

"What is it, father? Do tell me! What is it?"

"Why, Meeker has gone to New York, and in forty-eight hours has not only brought Joslin to a just settlement, but got from him a contract to sell me his half of the paper-mill at a most reasonable price."

"Good, good! Oh, how rejoiced I am!" and she threw her arms around her father's neck, and kissed him ever so

many times. "Oh, how glad I am! I never saw any thing worry you before, father, and it's all over now."

"A most extraordinary young man," continued Mr. Burns, taking up the law-papers. I see what he wanted the power of attorney for, now. A most extraordinary young man! It don't seem possible. Why, he brings Joslin in debt to me several thousand dollars!"

It would not be easy to describe the sensations of Sarah Burns while her father was giving expression to his own feelings. Joy that all cause of annoyance and trouble was removed from him; pleasure that this young man in particular had been the instrument; some slight fluttering at the recollection of her promise, and of the triumphant boldness with which Hiram had said "Won," as if he meant—as he *did* mean—that something more than her father's case had been won, something much more; admiration, too, of Hiram's cleverness, capacity, tact—such admiration as the sex always bestow on real ability: all these, commingled, served to produce in Sarah Burns a state of feeling—I should rather say of *being*—different from what she ever before experienced.

"Come, now for breakfast!" said Mr. Burns. "Every thing will be cold. Never mind, we can afford a cold breakfast on such news as this. I am sorry I had not pressed Meeker to stay, but I thought he was anxious to get away. He is an odd fellow."

"Why, he had been to breakfast, father."

"Yes, but one would suppose he would have run directly here, and said, in a word, how successful he was. He *is* very odd."

"I think, father, we may excuse his oddity for once."

"Indeed we may."

Mr. Burns soon finished, and hastened to the office.

He found Hiram at work at his desk on the ordinary business, which had accumulated in his absence, apparently as calm and unconcerned as if he had not been absent.

Mr. Burns seized his hand, and thanked him for his admirable achievement, with all the ardor and sincerity of his enthusiastic and honest nature. Hiram was undisturbed by it. His cold, clammy palm rested in the vigorous, cordial grasp of his employer unresponsive and unsympathizing. But Mr. Burns was in too happy and active a mood himself to be affected by that of his clerk. For the time, his was the ruling influence; and Hiram was the one insensibly to yield.

Mr. Burns asked so many questions, that at last he got the particulars from Hiram, which naturally he very much enjoyed. These particulars were recounted with modesty, without the slightest exhibition of egotism or conceit.

"I cannot sufficiently thank you, Meeker," said Mr. Burns, "and I hope to show you, some time, how much I appreciate what you have done for me."

"To have done my duty," replied Hiram, "is my chief satisfaction; but to merit your approbation is, I confess, a very great happiness."

Hiram was invited to tea that evening. It happened that Mr. Burns was obliged to go out shortly after. I do not suppose, on this particular occasion, that Sarah regretted it. I am sure Hiram did not. For no sooner were they alone together, than Miss Burns, almost with the air and tone of

close intimacy, so much was she carried away with the subject (women are such enthusiasts, you know), exclaimed, while she unconsciously moved her chair near Hiram :

"Now, Mr. Meeker, I want you to tell me all about your journey to New York. I insist on having every particular. I am so anxious to know how it was that you compelled that dishonest wretch to do just what you asked of him! Father says you dictated your own terms. Now for the secret of your power?"

"It was my persuasive manner of showing how much better an honest course is than a knavish one," said Hiram, smiling.

"Oh, yes, I dare say; but tell me what I want to know. You think, perhaps, I don't understand business sufficiently to comprehend you; but you are quite mistaken."

✓ We have all read how Desdemona was won. And her history gives proof, if we had no other, of the great dramatist's wonderful knowledge of the springs of human action and affection.

On this occasion, Hiram played Othello's part to perfection. After much persuasion, he was induced to give, in a modest but graphic way, a complete account of his trip to New York, with which the reader is already familiar.

Before he had concluded, Sarah Burns's appreciation was at the highest pitch. And when, after a little, he took up his hat to leave—he preferred to do so before Mr. Burns returned—he did not appear to notice Sarah's heightened color and unequivocal look of admiration, but bowed himself quietly out, without even taking her hand (he knew it was not Louisa or Charlotte Hawkins he was dealing with),

but nevertheless with a low, friendly, almost confidential, yet quite careless "Good-night" on his lips. But how all aglow he was, nevertheless, as he walked away from the house!—walked away without turning at the gate to salute Sarah again, though she stood on the piazza expecting it.

At this time, many humanizing emotions filled the soul of Hiram Meeker. He could not for the moment resist the happy influences which so pure and genuine a spirit as that of Sarah Burns shed even over *his* nature.

"Well—well—she is a glorious creature; and—she—loves me."

He stopped; his pulse beat quick; he was very near the corner where they had met when Sarah failed to recognize him.

"She would not cut me now—not quite," he added, in the old tone.

. . . . .

## CHAPTER XV.

DID she love him? My heart aches when I ask the question.

Miss Burns stood for several minutes on the piazza after Hiram went away.

Presently her father came up.

"Why, my daughter, are you here? Has Meeker left? It is early yet."

"Yes, he went some little time ago. I got the whole story out of him; and when he finished he ran off, because I made him talk so much, I fear."

Mr. Burns observed that his daughter was excited; but there was good reason, and he did not feel in any mood for scrutiny.

For perhaps the first time in her life, however, *she* felt conscious of something like *heart-vacancy*; of some void which her father's presence did not fill. This made her very unhappy. She strove to conceal it, and probably succeeded.

For the first time in her life, her father's kiss did not soothe, comfort, and satisfy her.

As soon as Joel Burns had finished his devotions—his daughter and he knelt always, morning and evening, side

by side, and sent up their joint supplications to the Almighty—Sarah hastened to her room. She slept little that night; but when she rose in the morning, after having breathed forth her prayers to God, in whom she so implicitly put her trust, she felt composed and happy, and ready to welcome her father and receive his usual caress.

I have no design to occupy too much of this narrative with the present subject. I am writing the history of Hiram Meeker—not of Sarah Burns. And Hiram's "little affair" with Sarah, as he used to call it, was scarcely an episode in his life.

The reader can easily understand how quietly, and with a manner both fascinating and insinuating, Hiram worked himself into the good graces of Sarah Burns.

Mark you, Sarah was not a girl to be treated like Mary Jessup, or the Hawkinses, or many others with whom Hiram was or had been a favorite. He knew this magnetically, and he undertook no false moves, assumed no petty freedoms.

There were times when Hiram was ready to give up his life-project of settling in New York. There were times when, even arguing, as he could only argue, from his selfishness, he was ready to decide to marry Sarah, and settle down in Burnsville. He would have a large field there. He would control abundant capital; he could go on and introduce various improvements, and multiply plans and enterprises. Then the recollection of the vast city, teeming with facilities for his active brain to take advantage of—



where MILLIONS were to be commanded, with no limits, no bounds for action and enterprise—would bring him back to his determination not to swerve from his settled object.

Yet, after all, he could get only so near to Sarah Burns. He knew she admired him, loved him—at least, was ready to love him; but this did not bring him into close communion with her.

After that morning, Sarah's state of mind and heart was at least tranquil. She possessed the true talisman; and it would have been in vain for Hiram to attempt to disturb her repose. As I have said, he understood this very well. He knew he could not trifle, or, as it is called, flirt with her; and he did not try.

After a while, he was piqued. Besides, he did admire Sarah more than any girl he ever met. Probably he loved her as much as he was capable of loving; which was—not at all.

At last, just after the conclusion of some brilliant operations, as Hiram called them, of Mr. Burns's, on a lovely day in the summer, when Nature was in her glory, and all things were very beautiful at Burnsville, Hiram—I won't say he designed to be false, I have many doubts on that head, and he is entitled to the benefit of them—Hiram encountered Sarah Burns a little out of the village, on a romantic path, which he sometimes used as a cross-cut to the mill. Affairs were very flourishing, the place full of activity; Joel Burns quite a king and general benefactor there; and Sarah Burns, a charming, very charming girl, his only daughter.

Hiram came suddenly on her. Both stopped, of course.

. . . . .

Mr. Burns that day wondered exceedingly that the tried and reliable Meeker should fail him on a very important occasion. Something made it necessary that Hiram should visit Slab City, and return in the course of the morning. But the morning passed, and no Hiram. Mr. Burns drove to the mill: his clerk had not appeared there.

At dinner the mystery was solved.

Hiram, it seems, had been unable to resist all the conspiring influences. When they met, the two had wandered away toward a pleasant grove; and, seated at the foot of a giant oak, he told Sarah Burns in most seductive terms how he loved her—how he had always loved her since they met at Mrs. Croft's.

Sarah did as young girls generally do—she burst into tears.

This was not at all to Hiram's taste.

Don't be severe with him: he could not appreciate the causes which produce such emotions.

He waited for these, as he was cool enough to consider hysterical demonstrations, to pass, and commenced again to press his suit.

"My father—my father!" exclaimed Sarah; "I can never give him up."

"We must leave father and mother, and cleave to each other," said Hiram, solemnly, and in a tone quite unlike that of a lover.

It sounded harsh and repulsive to Sarah, and she began to cry again, but not as passionately as before.

(Hiram was dissatisfied. Selfish ever, he disliked exceedingly that she should think of her father at such a time.)

"I know it," she finally replied, "and that is why I speak. Whatever may be my feelings, I shall never forget my duty to him."

"And how will loving me interfere with it?" asked Hiram.

"Whatever may be the consequence to me, I will never leave him. And you—your plans take you elsewhere. I understand it very well."

Hiram was surprised. He could not imagine how his secret purposes could have been discovered, for he had never divulged them.

"You cannot deny it," she continued, perceiving he was silent.

"It may be," he replied; "but that does not prevent my loving you. And who knows?—perhaps your father will not care to remain always at Burnsville."

"Oh, he will never leave it; that I am sure of," said Sarah, almost sorrowfully. "And I shall stay with him."

"Then you do not love me," said Hiram, in a tone not quite amiable.

"You know better!" exclaimed Sarah, her eyes flashing, and all the spirit of her father beaming forth. "Hiram Meeker, you know better!"

She was superb in her passion. Something besides affection shone forth now, and Hiram was led captive by it.

"Then shall I stay," he said, resolutely. "Take me or not, Sarah, I stay, too."

Mr. Burns was not altogether surprised at the announcement which awaited him on going home that day to dinner.

He had seen for some time that his daughter was much interested, and he thought Hiram equally so.

It is true the old feeling continued, and there were times when it appeared to break forth stronger than ever. Mr. Burns had made up his mind that it was doing Hiram great injustice to yield to it, since the young man was untiring in the discharge of his duties, and also most effective.

So he had endeavored to accustom himself to think of the event of his daughter's engagement with Hiram as very probable. What could possibly be urged against it? Hiram was of a respectable family, possessed of remarkable business ability, bearing an irreproachable character, really without a fault that could be indicated, and a consistent member of the church.

Yes, that was so. And, looking it over carefully, Mr. Burns used frequently to admit to himself that it *was* so. What then? Why, then Joel Burns would sigh, and suffer heaviness of heart, he scarcely knew why, and feel that there could remain for him no happiness should Sarah marry Meeker. Then he would ask himself, how his wife would have liked Meeker. He did not think she would have liked him.

Nevertheless, as I have said, Mr. Burns decided that the event was coming, and that he could not say nay.

And he did not say nay.

He said very little; but when Sarah threw herself in her father's arms, and he kissed her forehead, his heart almost burst. But he restrained his emotion. . . . .

"We are never to leave you, father. You know that, don't you?"

"My child, no one knows the future; but I am happy that you will live with me."

Hiram said nothing. Already his old caution was returning.

It will be recollected that, when Hiram first came to Burnsville, he sought to be admitted as a member of Mr. Burns's family, but was met with a cold and peremptory refusal. Now, Mr. Burns not only desired Hiram to come, but put his wishes in so decided a form that the latter could not object.

It was in vain that Sarah interposed. She begged her father not to insist on the arrangement. Neither had Hiram the least desire to quit his comfortable quarters at the widow Hawkins's, even for the sake of being near the one to whom he had pledged himself forever. But he did not dare betray himself. He did betray himself though, unconsciously, by the absence of any enthusiasm on a point where one would suppose he would exhibit a great deal. Mr. Burns had a single object in having Hiram near him. His daughter's happiness was most precious to him, and he resolved to make himself acquainted with the young man's character, if it were possible.

From the time Hiram began to call at the house of Mr. Burns, he gradually extended his visits over the village, and became a greater favorite than ever with the ladies. Not with the young girls alone, but with elderly spinsters and matrons. Strange how he managed so completely to make them all like him! His position with Mr. Burns brought him more and more into consequence, so that he

was regarded as unquestionably the best match in the place.

When Hiram at last removed from the widow Hawkins's to Mr. Burns's, the village was for a few days the focus of all sorts of guesses and surmises. Mr. Burns had enjoined on both that the engagement should not be made public at present—an arrangement particularly pleasing to Hiram, who would thus be quite at liberty to give what turn he pleased to the subject, and not forfeit the favor of several young ladies already too deeply interested in him.

As may be supposed, when Hiram announced his intended removal to Mrs. Hawkins, that lady was exceedingly surprised, not to say overcome. Hiram, however, coupled the information with such an air of grave importance, dropping a few words about the enormous increase of Mr. Burns's business, and the absolute necessity of frequent evening consultations, that she was completely disarmed. Then he remarked that his leaving the house would by no means cause any diminution of his interest in the young ladies, or in *her*; indeed, quite the contrary. Such interest must increase daily, the more so that he should not have the pleasure of so openly manifesting it. The widow blushed, she hardly knew why. Hiram squeezed her hand tenderly, and sought out Charlotte and Louisa. Charlotte was in the garden, and—I must tell the truth—Louisa in her chamber, crying. All this was charming to Hiram. He luxuriated in it (though in a more delicious degree), as in a nice steak or a delicate boiled chicken.

Hiram's interview with both the young ladies was, as you may readily imagine, perfectly satisfactory to both. In

short, when he quitted the house, all were content and hopeful, and all from different reasons.

It was now that Joel Burns sat himself down to investigate the cause of those strange sensations which he at times experienced in the presence of Meeker. The first time Hiram came to the table, not as a guest, but as an inmate of the house, nothing could have been more stiff and formal than the conduct of all three. In vain Mr. Burns endeavored to appear free. The spell was on him; and there sat the one who caused it.

Joel Burns looked at his daughter. She appeared diffident and not at ease, but, as he thought, happy. Hiram sat still, saying nothing and looking quite vacant. He was determined not to exhibit any points till he knew his ground better.

In the office, though, all was right. There he entered into, nay, anticipated Mr. Burns's plans, and he could not fail to evoke his employer's admiration.

I have spoken of Joel Burns's daily devotions; how, with his child, he was in the habit of coming before his Maker, bringing the offerings of their joint hearts. For two or three days after Meeker came to the house, this custom was continued. Then Sarah gently asked her father if Hiram might not be admitted.

[He had complained to her that it was not Christian-like to exclude him.]

A shiver passed over Mr. Burns; a groan nearly escaped his lips. How fast the links were giving way which kept his daughter with him! But the request was quite right,

and that night Hiram was present at the evening prayer. Sarah, on that occasion, did not sit so near her father as usual. And when they kneeled, her chair was still more removed. So it went on. Sarah, like all who love, or who think they do, invested her lover with every virtue in perfection (and lovers are more indebted for virtues to the imagination of the sex than they suppose), and was very happy. Hiram, who managed, under the excuse of not permitting the public to learn the secret of their engagement, to visit nearly as much as ever, was happy enough too. Only Joel Burns was sad—sad, not because he had given away his daughter, but because he feared for her happiness.

What was strange, Mr. Burns could not endure to hear Hiram speak on religion, and Hiram was very fond of talking on the subject. He conversed so well, every one said. He exhibited so many evidences of divine grace!

One morning, Sarah came into her father's room, and, after kissing him, said, with a great deal of diffidence—

“Father, I want to ask a favor of you.”

“Certainly, my child. What is it?”

“Won't you please ask Hiram sometimes to lead in prayer?”

Mr. Burns started as if stung by some reptile. He turned pale.

“What is the matter—what *is* the matter, father? How pale you look—how very pale you look!”

“Do I? I felt strangely, just at that moment. Yes, dear child, I will do what you request. I suppose I ought to have done so before; but then, you know, it is hard to—yes, dear—I will do as you wish.”



Sarah left the room, wondering not a little; and Joel Burns threw himself on the bed, and sobbed.

After a time, he recovered his composure. Kneeling at the side of the bed, he ejaculated: "*O God, help me to feel right! and, O heavenly Father, protect my child!*"

That day, after breakfast, Hiram was asked to make the morning prayer.

Shall I attempt to describe his ready utterance—his glib use of the most sacred expressions—his familiar handling of God's name?

Mr. Burns's feelings meanwhile cannot be described. In his presence, at least to his true apprehension, Hiram Meeker was like the Arch-Enemy when touched by the spear of Ithuriel. And yet Joel Burns kneeled, trying humbly to commit his soul to God, while Hiram was pouring out what he thought to be a most beautiful prayer!

. . . . .

It is not necessary to go on with particulars. Every two or three months Hiram found it for Mr. Burns's interest to visit New York. More and more he became confirmed in his first determination to ultimately settle there. He kept his views entirely to himself. But he did not neglect his opportunities whenever he went to the city, till at length his plans were matured.

Then, by degrees, he sounded Sarah Burns. He would suggest that it was best, perhaps, in order better to serve the interests of her father, that he should acquire more knowledge of metropolitan affairs, so that there need be again no danger of another Joslin matter. Sarah exhibited so much distress on these occasions, that Hiram forbore to

allude to the subject. He perfected his plans, and said nothing about them.

It was a part of his purpose, however, that these plans should leak out somewhat—sufficiently, at least, to set people discussing their probability—and he took measures accordingly. This accounts for the division of opinion in the village, of which I spoke in the first chapter.

. . . . .

Our story opens at this period.

Hiram Meeker and Sarah Burns had gone in company to attend the preparatory lecture on the Friday prior to communion. At that lecture Sarah heard, for the first time, that Hiram had decided to go to New York. The reader may possibly recollect the conversation between them as they left the lecture-room.

I said, though Sarah Burns could not disbelieve Hiram, her heart *felt* the lie he told her nevertheless.

Mr. Burns was also present on that occasion. Shall I say it?—a thrill of joy shot through him at the announcement; joy, if it must be spoken, that Hiram had proved a dissembler and a hypocrite!

His year would expire the coming week. Not a syllable had he said on the subject to Mr. Burns, and he had concluded on this method of acquainting both Mr. Burns and Sarah of his fixed determination.

The latter part of the walk was measured in silence. Some faint perception of the truth was beginning to dawn in Sarah's mind. Her father's spirit began to assert itself in her breast.

Mr. Burns walked slowly along a little behind. It was

tea-time when they entered the house. He went for a moment to his room. He had scarcely entered it, when the door opened, and his daughter came in. She ran up to her father; she threw her arms around his neck; and while she wept bitterly, Joel Burns could distinguish, between the sobs—

*“ Oh, father, father, your child has come back to you ! ”*

END OF PART I.



"I have been young and now I am old, and I bear my testimony that I have never found thorough, pervading, enduring morality with any but such as feared God,—not in the modern sense, but in the old child-like way. And only with such, too, have I found a rejoicing in life—a hearty, victorious cheerfulness, of so distinguished a kind that no other is to be compared with it."—JACOB.



# WAS HE SUCCESSFUL?

## PART II.

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### CHAPTER I.

THE first part of this narrative naturally closes with the termination of our hero's career at Burnsville, and his establishing himself as a resident of New York.

Up to this period, he has had no great difficulty in making his conduct consistent with his religious professions. He certainly has striven with a species of conscientiousness to do so, and we may say he has achieved his object.

Now, however, he is embarking on a very different sea from the quiet, placid waters of his village life. Here, Hiram Meeker, you will encounter many and frequent temptations to *do* wrong. For you are soon to commence on your "own account," and then you must prepare for that mortal struggle, in which none, without the grace of God to aid them, can come off victors.

Hiram understands this: that is, he has been educated to believe it. Surely he enjoys saving grace. Who more constant at church and evening meetings; who prays longer and more vigorously than he?

Let me repeat, that Hiram has a strong desire to enter the kingdom of Heaven, and thinks that all the chances are in favor of his doing so. But this desire is of the same nature as his wish to become rich. It is founded on the determination to promote the fortunes of the individual *me*, here and hereafter. It leads him to treat as a *principle* the statement of *fact*, that "honesty is the best policy;" and his policy is—SELF. He can practically master the theory of cause and effect as to what is going on *here*. And since he believes he will secure a good position in the world to come by strict observance of the "ordinances," he considers himself all right *there*.

It is with entire complacency, then, that Hiram Meeker sets sail in New York. He is young, and, as the word goes, handsome; with good health, strong nerves, an enduring frame, and excellent constitution. He is sufficiently well educated, and has a remarkable capacity for affairs, with experience enough in business to qualify him for any mercantile career he chooses to enter on. Moreover, in all the relations of life, he professes to be governed by the highest possible principle—Christian principle; and claims to be—indeed, really is, at least theoretically—a believer in the truths of our holy religion. Why is it, then, reader, that you have already taken such a prejudice against Hiram? For I know, as it were instinctively, that you are prejudiced against him. Indeed, I confess that in preparing his history for the press, I have unconsciously permitted certain comments to creep in, indicating my own feelings toward the young man. In fact, I could not help it, especially when I came to narrate Hiram's course toward Sarah Burns.



But here in New York, I begin to feel a painful interest for young Meeker. He is at the "parting of the ways." Up to now, there has been no great strain on his moral sense, while he has not been altogether insensible to humanizing influences. He has been, thus far, in the service of others, and had wisdom enough to understand that it was best for him to serve with fidelity. Thus, his sense of duty did not conflict with his interests, and he won golden opinions from all.

Probably, when he left Burnsville, but one person thoroughly knew him—that person was Sarah Burns. For it is given to those whose hearts are honestly *devoted*, in time to learn and fully comprehend the nature of the hearts brought in contact with theirs.

The young ladies universally recalled their delightful flirtations with Hiram with a sort of pleasurable regret, in which no angry feelings toward him were mingled. Even Mary Jessup looked back with a sentimental sigh, but not with any feeling of bitterness, to the period when she was so happy with "young Meeker, boarding at their house." The Hawkins girls severally had their secret hopes in the future. [As to the widow Hawkins, I cannot say.] But nobody understood the young man except Sarah Burns. *He* knew that; and when he drove away from her door, he felt that he was *found out*.

I am getting from my subject, which is Hiram's dangerous situation, now that he has reached New York. One thing much to be regretted is, that he has resolved, at least for the present, to abjure society, in his entire devotion to his main purpose. This is an alarming feature. For not-

withstanding, in his intercourse with the sex, he had sought entirely his own pleasure, still it was not without its qualifying influences. His mind was diverted from a perpetual thought of how he should get rich, and nature (I mean the nature common to us all) was permitted to have a certain sway.

When Hiram stepped foot in the metropolis, he cut off these diverting elements. He decided—and he had long and carefully considered it—that in the strife in which he was soon to enter, he should require all his time, all his faculties. For this reason, he determined to accept Mr. Eastman's offer of board and lodging at his house, albeit his wife was shrewish and generally disagreeable. He no longer permitted the gay throng in Broadway to move his nerves or excite his senses. And thus all these secondary impulses and emotions and sentiments yielded to the one main, controlling purpose.

Yes, Hiram Meeker, I feel a painful interest in your situation. I see that, once entered on your career, there will be no departure or deviation or pause in it. As metal in the mould, while in a fluid state, is capable of being converted into other forms, but after a time fixes and becomes unchangeable—so does the life of every human being reach a period when the aims and purposes are fixed and the character is settled forever. With some this comes earlier, with others later; but it comes inevitably to all of us.

It seems to me Hiram is fast approaching this epoch, and this is why my interest in him becomes painful. For after this—but I will not anticipate.

## CHAPTER II.

THE first thing which Hiram undertook, after getting established at his boarding-place, was to decide what church to attend. This was a matter which required a great deal of deliberation, and week after week he visited different places of worship of his own faith.

Mr. Bennett, with his family, went to an Episcopal church. He took the liberty, one day, of flatly advising his cousin to cut Presbyterianism, and go with him.

"The fact is, Hiram, I can't stand the blue-lights; they make a hypocrite of you, or a sniveller. Now, I don't profess to be a good person, but I think, after all, my neighbors know about where to find me. As to the Episcopalians, they give us good music, good prayers, and short sermons. They don't come snooping around to find out whether you sometimes go to the theatre, or if any of your family practise the damnable sin of dancing at parties. They mind their own business, and leave you to mind yours."

"What *is* their business?" asked Hiram.

Mr. Bennett was taken a little aback—hesitated a moment; then he replied, "Why, to preach and read the service, and perform church duties generally."

"Well," said Hiram, "I always thought it was a part of a minister's duties to look after the spiritual welfare of ever-

one of his church, and to visit the families, and converse with all the members."

"You forget that you're not in the country, where every thing is got up on an entirely different basis," replied Mr. Bennett. "You won't find much 'pastoral' work here, even among the blue-lights. They confine themselves to preaching brimstone sermons from the pulpit and at evening lectures, and to giving orders about the management of your family and mine, taking care that nobody shall enjoy any thing if they can help it. If you go to see a play, it is a plunge into Tophet; if you permit your child to tread a quickstep to a lively tune, both you and your child are fit subjects for the wrath to come."

"I rather think you are mistaken when you say that the Episcopalians approve of the theatre and late parties, and so forth," retorted Hiram. "I have been told, by two or three of that persuasion, that the clergy object decidedly to all these things."

"Gammon, Hiram!—gammon for the country market. I tell you, I know that we can do just what we please in the way of 'rational amusement,' as our clergyman calls it, and your people can't; and I advise you to come over to the liberal side."

Hiram shook his head.

"Well, if you won't, I recommend Dr. Pratt. He, I understand, permits a little fun occasionally; then he makes use of our prayers—commits them to memory, you know; and latterly has put on a gown, and has a little boy to open the door of his pulpit. I advise you to go there."

"Thank you," said Hiram; "but I don't think I should

relish that kind of a man. I prefer something decided."

"Then take Dr. Chellis—he's your chap. Boanerges! a regular son of thunder. Egad, I believe he *does* visit every soul of his flock—keeps them straight. The other evening he was invited to a little gathering at the house of a new-comer in his congregation—he always accepts invitations, and they say he is very fond of oysters and chicken salad, though he drinks nothing but cold water. Well, it happened that the young folks wanted to get up a quadrille, and began to arrange it innocently enough before his face and eyes. Thereupon, as I am credibly informed, he jumped up in a huff, and flung himself out of the house; and the next Sunday delivered an extra blast on the 'immoral tendencies of the dance.'"

"That's the man for me," said Hiram, firmly.

Mr. Bennett regarded his *protégé* with a keen, inquisitive glance, with a view to fathom him, if possible. It would seem that the result was unsatisfactory, for after a moment he exclaimed: "Well, I confess I don't exactly see through you. It may be one sort of thing; it may be another; but I can't say which."

"It is a very simple matter, Mr. Bennett. I was brought up strictly, and believe in my bringing up."

"All right, if you mean it."

"I do mean it. Besides, now that I have come to New York to reside, where I shall be subjected to the numerous temptations of a city life, I shall need more than ever to be under the preaching of just such a man as you describe Dr. Chellis to be."

"Oh, don't! that is coming it too strong. Now I think I *do* understand you. But, Hiram, drop all that sort of thing with me. If you want to join Chellis's church, join it; but talk your cant to the marines."

Hiram was angry, but he said nothing.

"You must not be vexed, Hiram. You know I want to do you all the good I can. Recollect, if you *are* smart, you have much to learn yet. Let me have your confidence, and I will advise you according to my experience. If you really like severe preaching, you can't do better than go in for the Doctor. He has the richest congregation in New York. Allwise, Tenant & Co., Starbuck & Briggs, Daniel Story—those are names for you; South-street men, too, in your line. They are the pillars of Chellis's church; good men and true, if they are blue-lights. Besides, there are lots of pretty girls—tight little Presbyterian saints, with plenty of cash. Their fathers can buy and sell Dr. Pratt's congregation and mine together. Yes, you are right; I wonder I did not think of it. Go in for Chellis."

Hiram was still silent. His heightened color and severe expression showed how little he relished Mr. Bennett's conversation.

Nothing is so disagreeable to a person whose nature is not thoroughly genuine, but who claims to act from proper motives, as to have another take it for granted that he does not do so.

He did not forget a word that Mr. Bennett had said, though. Indeed, he recovered his equanimity so far as to thank him for his suggestions; and, wishing him good-day, he started for his place in South street.

Mr. Bennett watched the young man as he walked up the street (the conversation occurred in the doorway of H. Bennett & Co.'s establishment), and until he had turned the corner. "Deep, very deep," he muttered, as he stepped inside. "He'll be 'round one of these days, or I am mistaken."

Meanwhile Hiram continued on his way to the store, his cheeks burning under the influence of Mr. Bennett's plain talk, but sensibly alive to the description of Dr. Chellis's church.

"Allwise, Tenant & Co., eh? and Starbuck & Briggs [Hiram had been but a few weeks in New York, and already had learned to pay that almost idolatrous deference to great commercial names which is a leading characteristic of the town]; that will do. Plenty of rich girls"—his heart began to beat quick—"plenty of rich girls. That's the place for me!"

Strange, that in this soliloquy he said nothing about the spiritual advantages to be derived under the preaching of so noted a divine as Dr. Chellis! Yet Hiram really liked strong preaching and severe discipline. For he never appropriated any of the denunciations. Feeling perfectly safe himself, it gratified him to hear the awful truths severely enforced on the outsiders.

We see, from this little conversation with himself, what was uppermost in Hiram's mind. Subsequent inquiries, carefully made of various persons, fully confirmed the statement of Mr. Bennett as to these particulars in relation to Dr. Chellis's church and congregation.

Dr. Chellis himself was a person of remarkable ability,

purity of character, and zeal. At this period he was about sixty years of age, but he possessed the earnestness and energy of a young man. His congregation were very much attached to him, and it is true he exercised over them a remarkable influence. Many people sneered, accusing them of "being led by the nose by their minister." They were led, it is true, but not in that way: rather by their understanding and their affections. For, strict and stern and severe as the "old Doctor" appeared to be, it was the *sin* he thundered against; not the individual. And those who were brought in more intimate contact with him, declared that he was a kind, tender-hearted man.

His church were devoted to him. The majority were a severe, toilsome, self-denying company—too much so, perchance; but of that I dare hazard no opinion: God knows. Like their minister, sincere, indulging in no cant; without hypocrisy—practising in the world during the week the principles they professed on Sunday to be governed by; a church deserving to be honored for its various charities (it gave twice as much as any other in the city), for the personal liberality of its members when called on to join in public or private subscriptions, and for the exalted influence they exerted in affairs generally.

Into such a church, and among such a people, Hiram Meeker proposes to introduce himself.

His first move was to call on Dr. Chellis without any introduction, and present his credentials from the church in Burnsville, as well as an excellent letter from his minister, certifying particularly to his religious character and deport-



ment. He thought that, by going as an unsophisticated youth from the country, he would make a better impression, and more strongly commend himself to the Doctor's sympathy, than in any other way.

I think, however, that Hiram's call was a failure. He had no ordinary man to deal with. Dr. Chellis had not only a profound knowledge of human nature, but a quick insight into its various peculiarities. He could classify individuals rapidly; and he read Hiram after fifteen minutes' conversation.

The latter, not accustomed to men of the Doctor's calibre, found himself wanting in his usual equanimity. His familiar rôle did not serve—he could see that—and for once his resources failed him.

For the Doctor did not appear to be specially interested when Hiram, *apropos* of nothing, except as a last card, undertook, in a meek, saint-like manner, to give him an account of his early conviction of sin, and subsequent triumphant conversion. Indeed, if the truth must be told, the worthy divine gave evident symptoms, to speak plainly, of being bored before Hiram's story was half finished! The latter was not slow to see this, and he found it difficult to rally.

At length he gave the Doctor an opportunity to speak, by bringing his personal narrative to a close.

"You have no acquaintances in the city?"

"I think I may say none, except in business; and my object in selecting such a church as yours is to keep up the same degree of piety which I humbly trust I maintained in my village home."

[Pretty well, Hiram—pretty well! but you have an old head to deal with, and an honest heart: be careful.]

"To do that," replied the Doctor, gravely, "you must not look back to what you were, or thought you were. Be sure you are in danger when you feel complacent about yourself."

These were awful words to Hiram, and from such a severe, grave, dignified old man.

"In danger!" That was something new. "Of what?" Why, no thought of a possibility of danger had crossed young Meeker's mind since the day he joined the church in Hampton.

He sat quite still, uncertain what reply to make.

He was interrupted by the tones of the Doctor's voice—tones which were modified from their previous severity.

"I will take your letter," he said, "and at the next communion, which will take place in about six weeks, you will be admitted to membership."

"I should like to have a class in the Sunday-school," said Hiram, breathing more freely.

"If you will speak next Sunday to Mr. Harris, the superintendent," replied the Doctor, "he will furnish you with one. There is a demand for teachers just at present, I heard him say."

Dr. Chellis rose, as if Hiram had taken up enough of his time. Our hero could but do the same. He bowed and left the room.

"A pretty sort of minister that," exclaimed he, between his teeth, as he quitted the house. "Pious! no more pious than my boot. Never listened to a word I said. I know

he didn't. Is it possible I must sit under this man's preaching? I see now what Cousin Bennett meant by things being got up on an entirely different basis here from what they are in the country. I should think they were! But there is Allwise, Tenant & Co., Daniel Story. I may trust myself with such names [he did not say with such *men*]. Ah! h'm—h'm—lots of pretty girls, with plenty of cash. I'll try it. Anyhow, it stands number one. No mistake about that!"

## CHAPTER III.

HIRAM soon learned a lesson. He discovered that there were people in New York just as quick-witted, as keen, and as shrewd, as he was himself. This did not alarm him—not a bit. He was only the more ready to appreciate the truth of Mr. Bennett's remark, that he had yet much to learn.

"I see it," quoth Hiram. "The city gets the best of every thing, by the natural course of supply and demand. Yes, it gets the best beef and mutton and fowls, and fruits and vegetables, and on the same principle it commands the best men. Well, I like this all the better. It was dull business in Burnsville, after all, with nobody to compete with. Give me New York!"

In the store of Hendly, Layton & Gibb, Hiram saw and conversed with shipmasters who were familiar with every port in the world. The reader will recollect, that at school he had devoted himself to mercantile geography. Thus he had located in his mind every principal seaport, and had learned what was the nature of the trade with each. The old sea-captains were amazed at the pertinence of Hiram's questions, and with the information he possessed on topics connected with their business. They could scarcely under-

stand it. It gave them a great respect for the "fellow," and Hiram speedily became a favorite with them all. He used to like to go on board their ships, and chat with them there, whenever he found time. Do not suppose that these were mere pleasure-excursions. Hiram Meeker was forming his opinion of each one of these captains. For in his mind's eye he saw some of them in *his* employ; but which? that was the question. So, by mingling with them, he learned much of the mechanical part of commerce; and he discovered, besides, their different characters, who were competent and honest, and who were not altogether so.

Hiram also spent a good deal of his time conversing with Eastman, with whom he boarded. He got the latter's ideas of business, and about the men they daily encountered, and Eastman could furnish a fund of valuable information, based on long experience.

Hiram all this time was indefatigable. He watched the course of trade. He endeavored to discover the secret of the success of the great South-street houses. He worked, he pondered, and yet all the time served Hendly, Layton & Gibb with fidelity. Eastman became attached to him. Mrs. Eastman said the man did not give her half the trouble she expected. So you see, in certain quarters, Hiram was as popular as ever.

Meantime he had secured a seat in and joined Dr. Chellis's church. He duly presented himself at the Sunday-school, and obtained a fine class. From that time he never missed a service on Sunday, nor a lecture or prayer-meeting, or other weekly gathering. He even attended a funeral occasionally, in his zeal to "wait" on all the ordinances.

He was, however, exceedingly modest and unobtrusive. He did not seek to make acquaintances, but no one could help noticing his punctilious regularity and decorum. I have remarked that Hiram determined to cut off what had been a great source of pleasure—society; but he still paid the same attention to his personal appearance as before. After a while, questions began to be asked: "Who is this new-comer, so constant, so devout, and so exemplary?"

"What a fine-looking fellow! I wonder who he is?" whispered Miss Tenant to Miss Stanley, one morning, as our hero passed their seats (they both had classes) to take his place with his Sunday-school pupils.

"I don't know, I am sure," replied her friend.

"I can't find any one who does. Do you know, *I* think he is real handsome?"

"So do I, if he would only lift his head up, and look people in the face; he is as bashful as a sheep."

"My little cousin is in his class, and he says they all like him so much. He takes such an interest in his pupils."

"Then I should think you could find out something about him."

"No: his name is Meeker; that's all any one seems to know."

"Funny name; I don't like it."

"Nor I. Still, we won't condemn him for his name. Besides, I like his face."

"Hush!"

Here the conversation of the two young people was interrupted by the rapping of the superintendent, and the services of the school commenced.

If young ladies of the importance of Miss Tenant and Miss Stanley begin to talk about Hiram, you may be certain it will spread through the school and into the church. *He* knew what was going on—of course he did; but he only took still greater pains with his personal appearance, and became more shy and reserved, and assiduously devout.

The elders of the church could not help noticing him.

The young ladies noticed him.

Heads of families observed his exemplary deportment.

Who could he be?

Dr. Chellis, meantime, did not lose sight of his new communicant. They frequently met, and Hiram was always greeted, if not with cordiality, yet kindly. Strange to say, contrary to his habit, the Doctor neglected or omitted to enter into conversation with Hiram on religious topics. He felt a repugnance to doing so which he could not explain. Every thing seemed so praiseworthy in Hiram's conduct, that one would suppose the worthy divine would like to engage him in conversation, as the Rev. Mr. Chase used to do at Burnsville. But a certain aversion prevented it.

When applied to for information about Hiram, the Doctor could say nothing, for he knew nothing; and so the mystery (for a mystery the young ladies determined to make of it) increased.

At last a rumor was circulated that Hiram had been disappointed in a love-affair. A mischief-loving girl detailed it to Miss Tenant, whose interest in the young Sunday-school


teacher gradually grew stronger, and it soon became a well-authenticated piece of history.

. . . . .

During this time a species of intimacy was growing up between Hiram Meeker and Hill. An odd companionship, you will say; but they seemed to get along very well together. The latter, as you may remember, was a wild, reckless fellow. He had his good traits, though. There was nothing mean in his composition, but much that was impulsive and generous. He never laid up a penny, and was always in debt. It was this unfortunate habit which had kept him so long at Joslin's. He had got in advance of his salary, and he would not quit till it was made up. When he left there, he succeeded in getting a place in a large wine and liquor house; for Hill's acquaintance was extensive, and in those days of extraordinary "drumming," in which he was a great proficient, his services were valuable. It was through Hill, as I have said, that Hiram got his place at Hendly's; and after that he was in the habit of looking in on him nearly every day, toward the close of business hours.

I cannot precisely explain by what species of fascination this poor fellow was attracted to Meeker. Doubtless it originated in the triumphant resistance which the latter opposed to Hill's attempt on him at their first acquaintance, and his complete victory over and discomfiture of Joslin, for whom Hill entertained a great abhorrence. There was a mystery about the sources of Hiram's power which completed the charm, and made Hill his willing subject, and afterward slave.





But what did Hiram want Hill? That would appear

more difficult to answer. He certainly did want something of him; for he encouraged his coming often to see him, and talked with him a great deal. He even lent him occasionally small sums of money. I repeat, what a droll companionship! Hill, a swearing, drinking, godless scapegrace—Meeker, a quiet, exemplary, religious young man.

Perhaps it was the rule by which opposites are attracted to each other.

Perhaps it was something else.

On the whole, I am inclined to think it *was* something else, on Hiram's part at least. I believe he acted, with respect to Hill, as he did with respect to everybody—from carefully-considered motives. We shall see, perhaps, by-and-by, how this was.

Eastman used to wonder that Hiram should tolerate Hill's society. To be sure, he himself had a sort of family regard for him. But his presence always annoyed him. He even expressed his surprise to Hiram, who replied by making use of the moral argument. He was sorry for the poor fellow. He hoped to do him some good. Possibly he might be able to bring him under better influences. Certainly Hill would not harm *him*; while, on the contrary, he, Hill, might be benefited.

Hiram did not tell the truth.

Really, if he had dared to stop and inquire of himself, he would be forced to acknowledge that he did *not* want Hill to be different from what he was. Then he would not serve his purpose. To be sure, sometimes, when Hill permitted a very strong oath to escape his lips, Hiram would fidget and

look uneasy, and beg his visitor to break himself of such a wicked habit. But the secret of Hiram's power did not lie in his *moral* influence, certainly, for Hill's habit of swearing did not improve; indeed, it grew worse.

In this way passed our hero's first year in New York.

## CHAPTER IV.

WE go back to look a little at the fortunes of the Meeker family. Twenty-three years have passed since we introduced it to the reader, on the occasion of Hiran's birth. Time has produced his usual tokens. Mr. Meeker is already an old man of seventy, but by no means infirm. His days have been cheerful and serene, and his countenance exhibits that contented expression which a happy old age produces.

A happy old age—how few of the few who reach the period enjoy *that*! Mr. Meeker's life has been unselfish and genuine; already he reaps his reward.

Mrs. Meeker, too, is twenty-three years older than when we first made her acquaintance. She is now past sixty. She still possesses her fair proportions; indeed, she has grown somewhat stouter with advancing years. Her face is sleek and comely, but the expression has not improved. When she wishes to appear amiable, she greets you with the same pleasing smile as ever; but if you watch her features as they relapse into their natural repose, you will discover a discontented, dissatisfied air, which has become habitual. Why? Mrs. Meeker has met with no reverses or serious disappointments in the daily routine of her life. But, alas! its sum total presents no satisfactory consequences. She has become, though unconscious of it, weary

of the changeless formality of her religious duties, performed as a ceaseless task, without any real spirit or true devotion. Year after year has run its course, and carried her along, through early womanhood into mature life, to the confines of age. What has she for all those years? Nothing but disquiet and solicitude, and a vague anxiety, without apparent cause or satisfactory object.

As they advance in age, Mr. and Mrs. Meeker exhibit less sympathy in each other's thoughts and views and feelings. By degrees the gulf widens between them until it becomes impassable. Every thing goes on quietly and decorously, but there is no sense of united destiny, no pleasurable desire for a union beyond the grave.

The children are scattered; the daughters are all married. Jane and Laura have gone "West," and Mary is living in Hartford. Doctor Frank we will give an account of presently. George is a practical engineer, and is employed on the Erie canal. William, who was to remain at home and manage the farm, is married, and lives in a small house not far off. His mother would permit no "daughter-in-law" with her. She did not like the match. William had fallen in love with a superior girl, fine-looking and amiable, but not possessed of a penny. Besides, she belonged to the Methodist church, a set who believed in falling from grace! Mrs. Meeker had peremptorily forbid her son marrying "the girl;" but after a year's delay, and considerable private conversation with his father, William *had* married her, and a small house which stood on the premises had been put in order for him. What was worse, William soon joined the same church with his wife, and then the happi-

ness of the young couple was complete. Mrs. Meeker undertook, as she said, to "make the best of a bad bargain;" so the two families were on terms of friendly intercourse, but they continued to remain separated.

Dr. Frank, as he was called, had taken his medical degree, and, by the indulgence of his father, whose heart yearned sympathetically toward his first-born, opportunity was afforded him to spend a year in Paris. Mrs. Meeker groaned over this unnecessary expense. When she saw that on this occasion she was not to have her own way, she insisted that the money her husband was wasting on Frank should be charged against his "portion." She never for a moment forgot Hiram's interest. She had schemed for years so to arrange affairs that the homestead proper would fall to him, notwithstanding William was to be the farmer. Mrs. Meeker calculated on surviving her husband for a long, indefinite period. She was several years younger, and, as she was accustomed to remark, came of a long-lived race. "Mr. Meeker was failing fast" (she had said so for the last ten years); "at his age he could not be expected to hold out long. He ought to make his will, and do justice to Hiram, poor boy! All the rest had received more than their share. *He* was treated like an outcast."

This was the burden of Mrs. Meeker's thoughts, the latter portion of which found expression in strong and forcible language. For she calculated, by the aid of her "thirds" as a widow, to so arrange it as to give her favorite the most valuable part of the real estate.

There was a fixedness and a tenacity about this woman's regard for her youngest child that was, in a certain sense,

very touching. It could not be termed parental affection—that is blind and indiscriminating; it was rather a sympathetic feeling toward a younger second self, with which, doubtless, was mingled the maternal interest. Whatever touched Hiram affected her; she understood his plans without his explaining them; she foresaw his career; she was anxious, hopeful, trembling, rejoicing, as she thought of what he must pass through before he emerged rich and powerful.

Hiram visited home but seldom. Even when at Burnsville, he came over scarcely once in three months. Often, when expecting him, his mother would sit by the window the whole afternoon, watching for her son to arrive. Many a time was supper kept hot for him till late into the night, while she sat up alone to greet him; but he did not come.

I hardly know how to record it, but I am forced to say that Hiram cared very little about his mother. Could he have possibly cared much for anybody, he would probably for her, for he knew how her heart was bound up in him. He knew it, and, I think, rather pitied the old lady for her weakness. His manner toward her was all that could be desired—very dutiful, very respectful. So it was to his father. For Hiram did not forget the statement of his Sunday-school teacher, which was made when he was a very young child, about the “commandment with *promise*.” Thus his conduct toward his parents was, like his conduct generally, unexceptionable.

For Frank, the eldest, however, Hiram felt a peculiar aversion. It was a long time before the former entertained any other feeling toward his “little brother” than one of

the most affectionate regard. By many years the youngest of the family, Hiram, while a child, was the pet and plaything of the older ones, and especially of Frank, who in his college vacations took pleasure in training the little fellow, who was just learning his letters, and in teaching him smart sayings and cunning expressions. As Hiram grew up, and began to display the characteristics I have already so fully described, Frank, who was quick and sensitive in his appreciation of qualities, could not, or at least did not, conceal the disgust he felt for these exhibitions. He took occasion, on his visits home, to lecture the youngster soundly. Hiram was not demonstrative in return, but Mrs. Meeker gave way to undue warmth and excitement in taking his part. This was while Hiram attended the village academy.

From that period there was coolness between the brothers, increased by the total difference of their views generally, which grew in time to a settled aversion. After Hiram went to Burnsville, they did not meet. Dr. Frank, after spending his year abroad, had returned and accepted the appointment of demonstrator of anatomy in a medical school in Vermont. Thence he was called to a chair in what was then the only medical college in New York.

He was at the time about thirty-six years old, and a splendid fellow. Enthusiastically devoted to his profession, Dr. Frank had looked to the metropolis as the field of his ultimate labors. But he knew the difficulties of getting established, and it was not till he was assured of a respectable foothold through his appointment that he ventured on the change. Doubtless the fact of his having a wife and children made him cautious. Now, however, we behold

him settled in town, zealously engaged with his class at lecture-hours, and making his way gradually in public favor.

It was with some surprise that, one evening, while making a short call at Mr. Bennett's, he encountered Hiram, who had just removed to the city. The brothers had not met for four years. On this occasion they shook hands with a species of cordiality—at least on the Doctor's part—while Hiram preserved a bearing of humility and injured innocence. The Doctor asked his brother many questions. Was he living in town—how long since he came to New York—was he engaged with Mr. Bennett—what was he doing? Hiram returned short answers to these queries, very short, acting the while as if he were in pain under a certain infliction. He looked up, as much as to say, "Now, let me alone; please don't persecute me!" But the Doctor did not give the matter up. He invited Hiram to come and see him, and told him, with a smile, to be sure and let him know if he should be taken sick. Hiram wriggled in his seat, and looked more persecuted than ever; he replied that his health was very good, and likely to continue so.

The words were scarcely out of his mouth, before it struck him that such an observation was a direct tempting of Providence, to trip his heels and lay him on a sick-bed for his boast. So, after a slight hesitation, he added: "But the race is not to the swift, brother, and I am wrong to indulge in vainglory about any thing. Life and death are uncertain: none realize it, I trust, more deeply than I do."

"I was in hopes, Hiram, that you had quit talking cant," said Dr. Frank, in a tone of disgust. "Take my advice, and stop it—that is, if it is not too late."



He did not wait for a response, but, much to Hiram's satisfaction, rose, and saying to Mrs. Bennett that he had overstayed his time, bade a rapid "good-evening" to all, and left the room.

"It is dreadful to feel so toward a brother. It is of no use. I won't attempt to resist it. The less we see of each other the better; but, good God! what's to become of him?"

Such was the Doctor's soliloquy as he walked rapidly on. Other thoughts soon occupied his mind, and Hiram was forgotten. The latter, however, did not forget. The Doctor's rebuke filled his heart with rage; still he consoled himself with the thought that his brother was an infidel, and would unquestionably be damned. Meantime he was forced to hear various encomiums on him from Mrs. Bennett and her daughters—Dr. Frank, as we have intimated, was a brilliant fellow, and in the very prime of life—and was still further annoyed by a remark of Mr. Bennett, that "the Doctor was doing very well; gaining ground fast; getting some of our best families."

Hiram departed from the house in an uncomfortable state of mind. All the way home he indulged in the bitterest feelings: so strong were these, that they found expression in ominous mutterings to himself, among which were—"Conceited fool!" "I hate him," and the like.

Suddenly Hiram's thoughts appeared to take a new direction. He turned and twisted like a person seized with a severe colic. Presently he stopped short, and exclaimed aloud: "What have I done? O God, have mercy on me! God forgive me!"

When he reached his room he hastily struck a light, and seized his Bible. Turning the leaves rapidly in search of something, his eyes were at length fastened on a verse, and he trembled from head to foot, and his breath nearly failed him, while he read as follows:

*"But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."*

"The very word! oh, the very, very word!" he exclaimed. "I have said it—said that word—said 'fool,' and I am in danger of hell-fire, if I do belong to the church. Yes, hell-fire!—oh—oh—oh, hell-fire! I wish mother was here. I know what I will do. I will write a confession, and send it to my brother to-morrow. I will abase myself before him. Yes, I will. Oh, oh, hell-fire! What *will* become of me?"

Hiram prayed a good portion of the night for a remission of the awful sentence; the bare possibility of its being carried out filled him with terror.

At last, overcome by weariness and exhaustion, he fell asleep.

He awoke early. He lay several minutes, revolving the last night's scene. Presently his countenance brightened. He sprang from the bed, and again turned to the dreaded text, but not with his previous alarm. On the contrary, he was hopeful. He read the verse over carefully, and said to himself: "I am all right, after all. It means, whosoever shall say the word *to* his brother. I did not make any reply to Frank, much as he irritated me. I restrained my anger, and suffered humiliation before him. I may have been too

violent in giving utterance to these expressions; but it is doubtful if I have even incurred *any* penalty, for I surely was not angry *without a cause*. God has heard my prayers, and has relieved my mind in answer thereto. I shan't have to make a confession either. Glad of that. How he would have triumphed over me!"

So Hiram went forth to his usual "duties," his complacency fully restored, and his faith confirmed that he was one of the "elect."

## CHAPTER V.

"ALREADY she guessed who it was!"

And who *could* he be—the intelligent, handsome, but, as it would seem, over-bold young man, who had presumed to place himself so confidently in her path and interrupt her walk till he had said his say, and then disappear as abruptly as he came?

She guessed who.

The arrival of her father, with the guest he was to bring, proved that she had divined right. For, coming up the avenue, she saw that it was the same handsome young man she had a little before encountered. And she could perceive in her father's countenance a glowing look of satisfaction as the two mounted the steps (Sarah was peeping through the blinds), and proceeded to enter the house. Before they had accomplished this, however, the room was vacant. Sarah was nowhere to be found—that is, for the moment; but in due time she presented herself, and thereupon Dr. James Egerton—that was his name—was formally introduced to her.

"I recollect you now," said Sarah, seriously. "Your features have not at all changed, except that they seem larger and—"

"Older, doubtless," interrupted the young man. "You,

too, have changed, even more than I; but I knew you the moment my eyes fell on you."

Seven years had passed since grievous afflictions befell Joel Burns—when his wife died, and his daughter was stricken low, and he himself was brought to the very gates of death. The reader has already been made acquainted with these circumstances, and will scarcely forget that, when the famous medical man returned to New Haven after visiting Sarah, he dispatched his favorite student, with directions to devote himself to the case. It is known, too, with what earnestness and skill the youth—for he was little more than a youth—performed his responsible duties.

Here I thought to take leave of him; but, as he has abruptly come on the stage as a visitor at Burnsville, and as Sarah Burns already exhibits an incipient interest in the young doctor, I must let the reader into the secret of his sudden appearance.

During the long weeks of Joel Burns's illness and convalescence, he had become much attached to James Egerton. And when the medical student quitted Burnsville, after carrying his patient through the fever in triumph, the latter felt more grateful than words would express. It is true, young Egerton remained at his bedside by direction of the physician whose pupil he was: still the manner in which he had discharged his duties won the heart of the sick man. When at length he was preparing to depart, Joel Burns endeavored to think of some way to manifest his appreciation which would be acceptable to the youth. This was difficult. Both were of refined natures, and it was not easy

to bring the matter to pass. Mr. Burns, at length, after expressing his grateful sense of his services, plainly told Egerton that he would delight to be of service to him, if it were possible.

"I feel obliged to you, Mr. Burns," said the student; "but it is not just that I should excite such emotions. Let me confess that, while I do respect and esteem you, it is love of my *profession*, and not of any individual, which has led me to use more than ordinary care while attending on you. I have a firm belief in the method of my principal, and it is a labor of love with me to endeavor to demonstrate the truth of his theory in the treatment of typhus fever. Your case was a magnificent one. My master is right, and I know it."

"Now you take just the ground I admire; you enable me to say what before I hesitated to speak of," said Mr. Burns, warmly. "Tell me honestly how you are situated. Can I not aid in affording you still further advantages for study and practical observation?"

"Mr. Burns," replied the student, "it is my turn to feel grateful—grateful for such genial recognition of what I am, or rather of what I hope to make myself. Something of your own history I have learned in this place—this place of your own creation—and I may say there are points of analogy between your own early struggles and mine. But I must depend on myself. To accept aid from you would weaken me, and that you would not wish to do."

"Go," said Mr. Burns, with enthusiasm; "go, and God go with you! But promise me this: let me hear from you regularly. Let me not lose sight of one of whom I hope so much."

"That I promise, with pleasure."

Then he turned to find Sarah, to bid her good-by. She was running across the lawn, but stopped abruptly on hearing her name called.

"Little maiden," said the young man, "I am going away. We shall have no more races together. When I see you again, it won't do for either of us to romp and run about."

"Why? Are you not coming to see us till you are old?"

"I don't know that, but I shall not come very soon. After a while I shall go across the ocean, and you will grow up to be a young woman. So I must say a long good-by to my little patient."

Sarah was twelve, Egerton scarcely twenty. For the instant, young as she was, there was actually established between them a sentimental relation. They stood a moment, looking at each other.

"Good-by," said Egerton, taking her hand. "I think I must have this for a keepsake." It was a straggling curl, detached from its companions, which the student laid hold of. Sarah said not one word, but took a neat little morocco "housewife" from her pocket, produced a small pair of scissors, and clipped the curl quickly, leaving it in Egerton's hand.

"You won't forget me," he said.

"No."

The next instant she was bounding over the green grass, while Egerton walked slowly into the house. In a few minutes he was off.

I do not think this scene produced any impression on

Sarah Burns, beyond the passing moment; but to Egerton, who was just of an age to cherish such an incident, it furnished material for a romantic idea, which he nourished until it came to be a part of his life-plans. Whatever the reason was which actuated him, it is a fact that he wrote Mr. Burns, not often, to be sure, but quite regularly. After two or three years he went abroad, still keeping up his correspondence. Mr. Burns, for some reason we will not conjecture, was not in the habit of speaking to his daughter about Egerton. Possibly he did not wish her to remember him as a grown-up man while she was still a little girl. Possibly he desired, should they ever meet, that their acquaintance might commence afresh. At any rate, Sarah was left quite to forget the existence of the young fellow who watched by her so faithfully; or if by chance some recollection of him, as connected with that dreadful season, came into her mind, it was purely evanescent and without consequence.

Mr. Burns, however, always cherished certain hopes. The reader will recollect his sadness of heart when he discovered how matters stood between his daughter and Hiram Mecker. This was owing principally to his honest aversion to Hiram; but a disappointment lurked at the bottom. It was only the week before the scene at the preparatory lecture, that he had received a letter from Egerton, written on American soil, advising him of his return from Europe in a vessel just arrived from Marseilles. Mr. Burns answered it immediately, inviting him to come at once and make him a visit; but he breathed not a word of this to Sarah.

Affairs between her and Hiram were brought to a crisis



much faster than Mr. Burns could have anticipated. In short, Dr. Egerton arrived at the most auspicious moment possible. I shall not, however, be precipitate. On the contrary, I shall leave the lovers—if lovers they are to be—to pursue their destiny in the only true way, namely, through a tantalizing maze of hopes and fears and doubts and charming hesitations and anxieties to a *dénouement*, while I return to the proper subject of this narrative—Hiram Meeker.

## CHAPTER VI.

HILL has opened a wholesale liquor-store on his own account! Where did Hill raise the money to start in business—a poor devil who could never get eighteen pence ahead in the world?

It does not appear.

For one, I will say that Hiram Meeker did not furnish it. *He* not only belongs to the temperance society, but he believes all traffic in the “deadly poison” to be a sin.

Still, where did Hill get the money or the credit to start a wholesale liquor concern?

More than this, Hill is doing a pretty large business. He drinks less, and, I think, swears less than he did. He appears to be every way more respectable. Hill occupies a very fine store in Water street. He does not deal in adulterated liquors. He even sells his articles, if the customer desires it, “in bond;” that is, from under the key of the custom-house, which of course insures their purity. By a singular coincidence, Hill’s store is adjoining a “U. S. Bonded Warehouse.” Hill’s goods, for convenience’ sake, are sent to that particular warehouse—frequently. The liquors are always stored in the basement. This basement is not supposed to communicate with that of Hill’s store. Certainly not. Yet Hill, *solus*—entirely and absolutely *solus*—spends many evenings in his own basement.

Hill is a large purchaser of pure spirits. Pure spirits are worth thirty-one cents a gallon, and brandy of right brand is worth two or three dollars a gallon. One gallon of pure spirits mixed with two gallons of brandy cannot be detected by ninety-nine persons of a hundred. Some say it is equally difficult to detect a half-and-half mixture. Still, Hill sells his brandy in bond.

I repeat, Hiram Meeker does *not* furnish Hill the money. It is true, their intimacy continues. Further, Hill has good references—none other than H. Bennett & Co. Strange as it may seem, H. Bennett himself is in the habit of putting his name on Hill's paper. Yet I am told he does not even know Hill by sight!

Hill is making money, though—is making it fast. Hiram is still dutifully employed in the house of Hendly, Layton & Gibb; but this has not prevented him from making, with permission of the firm, several ventures on his own account. These ventures always turn out well. It was not long since he shipped a schooner-load of potatoes to New Orleans, on information derived from the master of a vessel which had made a remarkably rapid passage, and who reported to him, and to him only. He considerably more than doubled his money on this venture.

In Dr. Chellis's church, Hiram has made respectable progress. He has permitted himself to break over the strict rule first adopted as to his social life. He goes a little into society, but it is the very best society which that congregation furnishes. Report says he is engaged to Miss Tenant. She is the only child of Amos Tenant, of the firm of All-wise, Tenant & Co. This firm is reputed to be worth over

a million of dollars. Miss Tenant—Miss Emma Tenant—is the young lady who, from the first, took such an interest in Hiram at the Sunday-school. She is an excellent girl. She is very pretty, too; and, I am sorry to say, she seems to have fallen in love—really and positively in love with Hiram. He, the calculating wretch, has canvassed the whole matter; has made careful investigations of the condition of the house of Allwise, Tenant & Co., and has satisfied himself that it is firm as a rock; and that Mr. Tenant is no doubt worth the pretty sum of three hundred and fifty thousand dollars, or such a matter.

Emma is an only child.

O! Hiram, how dare you utter those vows of love and constancy, and everlasting regard and affection, coming, as you do, with your fingers fresh from turning the leaves at the register's office, where, forgetting your dinner, you have spent the entire afternoon in satisfying yourself about the real estate held by "Amos Tenant?" Had the record under your precious investigation not proved satisfactory, you would not have spent five minutes thereafter in the society of Emma Tenant.

Yet your conscience does not reproach you. Not one bit. Positively you are not aware of any thing reprehensible or even indelicate in what you are about. Thinking of the matter, as you carefully scan the books of record, you regard it precisely as you would any other investigation. To you it is essential that the girl you are to marry should have money. If she has, you will love her—for it is your *duty* to love your wife; if she has not, you cannot love her, and of course (duty again) you cannot wed her.

Poor Emma Tenant! No protecting instinct warns you against the young man who is now making such fervid protestations. You receive all he says as holy truth—sincere, earnest avowal, out of his heart into yours, for time and for eternity.

You, Emma Tenant, are a good girl, innocent and good: why, oh, why does not your nature shrink by this contact?

We forbear to paint the love-scene in which Hiram figures. Enough to say that Emma could not and did not disguise the state of her affections. Yes, she confessed it—confessed, poor thing, that she had been attracted by Hiram from the day she first saw him enter the Sunday-school to take his place as one of its teachers.

How happy she was as she sat trembling with emotion, her hand in Hiram's calculating grasp, while she blushingly recounted how long and how much she had been interested in him!

"But your father," interposed Hiram, anxiously—"he will never give his consent."

"And why will he not?" replied Emma. "I am sure he likes you already; and when he knows—"

She stopped, and blushed deeper than ever.

"When he knows," said Hiram, taking up the sentence, "he will hate me—I am sure he will."

"How can you say so?" replied the confiding girl? "I **am** his only child, and he will approve of any thing which is for my happiness."

"But he may not think an engagement with me" (you see Hiram was determined on the *engagement*) "will be for

your happiness. I am not known here; I am not yet in business for myself; although, so far as that is concerned—”

“Don’t speak so—it pains me; as if I could think of such things *now*,” she whispered, as if really in bodily distress.

“But it *must* be mentioned, and at once; we must tell your parents. It would be highly improper not to do so.”

He meant to make all sure.

“Oh, well, I suppose you are right; but it will make no difference to papa if you had not a penny. I have heard him say so a thousand times.”

“Have you?” replied Hiram, drawing a long breath—  
“have you really?”

“Indeed I have. He has always said he would prefer to see me marry a high-minded, honorable young man, of strict integrity, without a cent in the world, to the richest person living, if he were sordid and calculating. Oh, he despises such persons. Now are you satisfied?”

Hiram *was* satisfied—that is, logically; but somehow he felt hit, and in spite of himself his countenance was clouded, and he was silent.

“I have said something to wound you—I know I have!” exclaimed Emma.

“To wound me! My angel, my—” etc., etc., etc. (the pen refuses to do its office when I come to record Hiram’s love-expressions). “How can you think so at this moment of my greatest rapture, my most complete—” etc., etc., etc. (pen fails again). “It was my intense joy and satisfaction to learn how noble and disinterested your father is, that rendered me for the moment speechless.”

After considerable discussion, it was arranged that Emma

should be the one to communicate to her parents the interesting fact that Hiram sought her hand. On this occasion his courage so far failed him, that he preferred not to break the subject himself, although generally so very capable and adroit in personal interviews.

Mr. Tenant, as usual with papas, was a good deal surprised. He had not thought of Emma's marrying—considered her still little else than a school-girl, and so on—well—he supposed it must come sooner or later. He knew very little about the young man, but what he did know was certainly in his favor.

To cut the story short, the whole matter was pleasantly settled, and Hiram established as the accepted of Miss Tenant.

In a subsequent interview with Mr. Tenant, our hero quite won his heart. That gentleman was an old-fashioned merchant; the senior member of a house known as one of the most honorable in the city. I say senior member of the house, for the "Allwise" whose name stood first was a son of the original partner, through whose capacity mainly it had been built up and made strong. Mr. Tenant, I repeat, was a merchant of the old school, high-toned and of strict integrity; not specially remarkable for ability, but possessing good sense and a single mind. The house once on the right track, with its credit and its correspondents established, he had only to keep the wheel revolving in the old routine, and all was well.

Mr. Tenant was quite carried away by Hiram's conversation. The latter was so shrewd and capable, yet so good and honest withal! He first recounted to his prospective

father-in-law a little history of his whole life. He portrayed in feeling terms how God had never forsaken, but on the contrary had always sustained and supported him—in his infancy—at school—through various vicissitudes; had conducted him to New York—to Dr. Chellis's church—into his (Mr. Tenant's) family; and now, as a crowning mercy, was about to bestow on him the greatest treasure of the universe, to be a partner of his joys and sorrows through life.

Then he discoursed of affairs—of what he hoped, with a “common blessing,” to accomplish. He informed Mr. Tenant confidentially that in the approaching month of May he should commence a general shipping and commission business. His plans were matured, and though his capital was small—

“Count on me, young man—count on the house of All-wise, Tenant & Co.,” interrupted the kind-hearted old gentleman. “I have no boy,” he continued, with tears in his eyes; “my only one was snatched from me, but now I shall look on you as my son. You will start in May. Good! And what the house can do for you, will be done.”

“Then perhaps I may be permitted to refer to you?”

“Permitted? I shall insist on it. What is more, I will see two or three of our friends, and make up your references myself. You must begin strong. Where do you keep your account?”

Hiram told him. It was a bank where Mr. Bennett had introduced him.

“That is well enough; but those are dry-goods people, not at all in our line. I must introduce you at our bank,



or, what is better, I will get I      Story to introduce you  
at his. Then you will get a double advantage."

Need I add that Hiram was in ecstasies? His position would now equal his most brilliant dreams. To be placed at once on an equality with the old South-street houses! to have Daniel Story introduce him to his bank, with permission to refer to him! It was even so. The future son-in-law of Amos Tenant would gain just such an *entrée* to business life.

And profitable use did Hiram Meeker make of these advantages. He no longer thought of depending on H. Bennett & Co. Very quietly he thanked his cousin for his kind offer of assistance, by way of reference, etc.; but he was of opinion that it would be better to have some names in his own line. Then he mentioned who were to be his "backers," whereat Mr. Bennett was amazed, yet highly gratified; and, without seeking to inquire further, told Hiram he "would *do*"—he always said he would; that he must call on him, however, whenever he thought he could give him a lift, and predicted that he would be very *successful* on his own account. All which Hiram received meekly and mildly, but he said nothing in reply, except to express his thanks.

It is not my purpose to give in detail the particulars of Hiram's commercial life. Having been sufficiently minute in describing his early business education, the experience he acquired, and the habits he formed, the reader can readily understand that his career became from the start a promising one. He was familiar with all the ramifications of commerce. He thoroughly knew the course of trade in

New York. He had studied carefully the operation of affairs, from the largest shipping interest to the daily consumption of the most petty retail shop. He had managed to lay up quite a respectable sum of money, and all he now wanted was a good opportunity to launch himself—and it was presented.

I am inclined to think Mr. Tenant would have been willing to have taken him into his own firm, had Hiram wished, but he had no such ambition. He desired by himself to lay broad and deep the foundation of a large business, and have it expand and become great in his own hands. He did not believe in partnerships; it is doubtful if he were willing to trust human nature so much as to admit anybody to such a close relation as that of *business* associate.

In the management of his affairs, Hiram made it a point to acquire the reputation of fair and honorable dealing. His word was his bond. That was his motto; and he carried it out fully and absolutely. Mistakes could always be corrected in his establishment. No matter if the party were legally concluded. He stood by the spirit of his contracts, as well as by the letter. A mere verbal say-so, though the market rose twenty-five per cent. on his hands the next half hour, could be relied on as much as his indenture under seal. And so he gained a splendid name the very first year of his mercantile career. Yet, I *must* say it, behind all this fine reputation, this happy speech of men, this common report and general character, sat Hiram alert and calculating, whispering to himself sagaciously, "*Honesty is the best policy.*"

[In affairs, he meant. Had he carried the apophthegm .

out into every detail of life, through its moral and social phases, it would have required indeed the eye of the Omniscient to have discerned and penetrated his error.]

I come to the close of Hiram's first year of business on his own account. He had suddenly loomed into importance. But never was there an effect more directly traceable to a cause. He did not embark till he was in readiness for the venture, and results came quickly. With change of position he had made corresponding changes in his social life. He left Eastman's, and took pleasant though not expensive quarters in a more fashionable part of the city—not far, indeed, from Mr. Tenant's house. He visited, in company with Emma, all her family friends and acquaintances. He made such progress in the church, that the majority of the female teachers in the Sunday-school were in favor of electing him superintendent. In short, he was becoming a very popular young man.

As I have said, I now reach the close of Hiram's first year. I wish I could stop here. I go on with that reluctance which I invariably feel when recording what must add to the repugnance with which we all regard Hiram's character.

The engagement between Hiram and Miss Tenant had been made public. The time for the marriage was fixed at about the first of July—only six weeks distant. It was a period when Hiram felt that he could leave town most conveniently for his wedding-trip. The preparations on Emma's part were ample, as became her family and social position. She was very happy. She loved the young man, and believed he loved her. Hiram was good-natured and agree-

able, and did all in his power to exhibit his best qualities. The result was, that he was very much liked by both Mr. and Mrs. Tenant, and was already quite domesticated at their house.

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## CHAPTER VII.

DURING that spring there was a great deal of speculation in certain leading articles of export. The house of Allwise, Tenant & Co., having first-class correspondents abroad, and enjoying large credit, advanced more liberally than was prudent. It was the younger members who decided to go largely into the enterprise. There came a panic in the market. Several leading houses in London and Liverpool failed; others in New York followed—and, among them, Allwise, Tenant & Co.

It proved that this firm, though eminently sound and aboveboard, was not as wealthy as was generally supposed. Its high character for integrity and honor, and an existence of near forty years without a reverse, gave it great reputation for wealth and stability.

The blow was sudden and effective. The capital of the concern was wiped out of existence, and the individual property of the partners followed in the wake of destruction.

Hiram, like others, had over-estimated Mr. Tenant's property. The latter was nevertheless a rich man for those days, and worth over one hundred thousand dollars. By this reverse he was penniless.

Hiram was on 'Change when he first caught the rumor

of the catastrophe. His position with regard to the family (for his relations with it were now well understood) made it difficult for him to make many inquiries; but he hastened to his counting-room, and dispatched a messenger to Hill to come to him forthwith. Hill was prompt, and, having been carefully charged with his commission, at once started to execute it. He came back duly.

"All gone to ——! Not a grease-spot left of them."

"Don't be so gross, Hill. You are constantly shocking me with your profanity.—Are you sure, though?"

"Yes. More bills back, twice over, than they can pay. A clean sweep, by ——!"

"That will do, Hill—that will do; but don't swear so—don't."

"Now I am here," continued Hill, "what about that invoice of brandy to Henshaw? He declares the brandy ain't right. You know you thought—"

"Hill," interrupted Hiram, "I can't talk with you now. Leave me alone, and close the door after you."

Hill went out without saying a word.

If we except a slight paleness which overspread his countenance, Hiram had exhibited no sign of emotion from the moment he heard of Mr. Tenant's failure to the time he disposed so summarily of his satellite Hill. When Hill left, he rose and walked two or three times quickly up and down the room, and then took his seat again. His thoughts ran something in this way:

"I never supposed old Tenant to have any business ability; but I thought the concern so well established, that it could go alone. So it could, if those young fellows had not

made asses of themselves. What's to be done? Tenant certainly has a large amount of individual property. It is worth saving. Respectable old name—if he keeps his money. [Hiram smiled grimly.] I will step round at once and offer my services, before other folks begin to tinker with him.”

On my word, reader, during all this time, Hiram never once thought of Emma Tenant. She did not for a solitary instant enter in any of the combinations which he was so rapidly forming and reforming. So entirely was he occupied with canvassing the effect of the failure on his personal fortunes, and thinking over what was best to be done under the circumstances, that he had no space in his brain, much less in his selfish heart, for the “object of his affections,” to whom he was to be married in one little month.

How would *she* feel? How would the blow affect *her*? What could he do to reassure her? How could he best comfort her? What fond promises and loving protestations could he offer, that now more than ever he desired to make her happy?

Nothing of this, nothing of this occupied him as he sat in his private office, rapidly surveying the situation.

Poor Emma!

Carrying out his decision, Hiram took his way to the establishment of Allwise, Tenant & Co.

He was immediately admitted to Mr. Tenant's private room. That gentleman sat there alone, with his eyes fixed on a long list which his book-keeper had just furnished him. He looked somewhat disturbed and solicitous, but presented nevertheless a manly and by no means dejected mien.

"Ah, my dear boy, I knew there was no need of sending for you. I *knew* you would be here. God bless you! Sit down, sit down. I want to use your ready wit just now for a few minutes. Thank God, I have your clear head and honest heart to turn to!"

All this time Mr. Tenant was pressing Hiram's hand, which lay impassively in his. The honest man was too much carried away by his own feelings to notice the other's lack of sympathy.

"Why, my dear sir," said Hiram, at length, "did you not give me some hint of this? We might have—"

"I had no idea of it myself till the mails were delivered this morning. Phillipson & Braines's stoppage has destroyed us. They owe us immensely on our consignments. Such a strong house as we thought it to be! When they suspended, it discredited us with our other friends, for everybody knew our relations with them, so that they would neither accept our bills nor protect us in any way. We are struck down without warning."

"No hope of reconstruction?" asked Hiram.

"None."

"You wanted me just now, I think you said."

"Yes. There are one or two family matters which Joseph [Allwise] thinks should be treated as confidential. Certain deposits, and so forth. We have already discussed it somewhat. You shall examine, and give me your opinion."

"Had you not better first make some arrangements to protect your individual property?"

"What?"



Hiram repeated the question, and in a more definite shape.

He was astounded when the honorable old merchant told him that he should make no reservations; that his property, all of it, belonged to his creditors, and to his creditors it should go.

Even in this juncture Mr. Tenant was so taken up with his own position, that he failed to discover Hiram's real object. He actually turned consoler.

"Courage, my boy!" he exclaimed. "My wife has a little sum of her own—about twelve thousand dollars—enough to keep us old folks from starving; and as soon as you are married, we will club together, and live as happy as ever—hey?"

"I hope, after all, matters are not as bad as you suppose," said Hiram, wishing to make some response, but determined not to commit himself.

"Oh, but they are," replied Mr. Tenant. "We must not deceive ourselves. However, let that pass. Now tell me what you think about these collections."

Hiram forced himself to listen patiently to Mr. Tenant's statement, for he had not yet decided on the course he was presently to pursue. So he talked over the question, pro and con, managing to fully agree with the views of Mr. Tenant in every particular.

"I knew you would think as I do about this," exclaimed the latter, joyfully. "It does you credit, Hiram; it shows your honorable sense. How could I take that money out of the general indebtedness? How could I?—Well, well, I have already employed too much of your time. We shall

do nothing to-day but examine into matters. You will be up this evening?"

"Certainly."

"Good-by till then, my dear boy. Emma must spare you to me for once. To-night we will have our various statements ready, and I shall want your help to look them over."

"The old fool!" muttered Hiram, as he left the place—"the old jackass! I won't give it up yet, though. I will try his wife. I will try Emma. No, I won't give it up yet. I will go there this evening, and see what can be done. But if I find that—"

The rest of the sentence was inaudible.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

BEFORE evening, Hiram had informed himself fully (through Hill) of the current rumors about the failure of Allwise, Tenant & Co. He was glad to find a universal sympathy prevailing in all business circles for this old and respectable house.

"That's well, at any rate," quoth Hiram to himself. "No one will think of attacking the old gentleman, if he does secure a portion of his property—or, rather, nobody will suspect him of attempting it. He is bound in honor to me [oh, Hiram! *honor!*] to protect his daughter. Such was really the agreement—that is, by implication—when we became engaged. It won't be honest if he leaves me in the lurch. He need not think that he can do that, though. Twelve thousand dollars! Why, it will scarcely board the old folks in any decent place; and who does he think is going to marry his daughter at that rate?"

Hiram was at the house at his usual hour. It was a lovely evening, about the first of June; and, as he walked slowly along, he caught a glimpse of Emma through the blinds. She was seated at a window, evidently watching his coming. He could perceive, before she knew it was he, that her countenance was troubled. Hiram turned away

his head. Evidently something attracted him in another direction.

Mr. Tenant resided in a handsome house, in one of the finest squares of the city. As Hiram mounted the steps, he paused a moment to survey the scene. The trees were in full leaf, and the odor of flowers filled with their fragrance the evening air.

"No, he must not give this up," he muttered.

He turned and rang the bell sharply. It was a habit of Emma to open the door herself when she saw him coming, but this time the servant responded to the summons.

Hiram passed into the front parlor without speaking. As he approached Emma, she rose and threw herself into his arms, and burst into tears. She did not attempt to speak, but kept sobbing as if heart-broken.

Hiram stood still, and, in consequence of his undecided state of mind, a good deal embarrassed.

"Why, what is the matter, Emma?" he said at length. "Has any thing happened to your father or mother?"

"You know what has happened," she finally articulated.

"Well, my dear child, is that any thing to be so distressed about?"

"Don't *you* care?" she exclaimed, looking up joyfully.

"To be sure I care, but only on your account, and—"

"Oh, never think of me. I shall be the most light-hearted creature in the world. I was only—afraid—afraid—"

"Of what, pray?"

"I cannot tell. That—that—perhaps—perhaps—you would not—that—papa's losing every thing might make a difference in your feelings. Now don't be angry. (Hiram

was looking grave.) I did not *really* think it would; but —but the bare possibility has made me so very unhappy — so very, very unhappy!” and she began to cry again.

“Come, Emma, you must not be so foolish. Sit down now with me, and let me say a few words to you; for your father will want me in a few minutes, and I shall have to be with him all the evening.”

“Oh, I am so glad; you will be such a comfort to him! I know you will.”

Hiram made no reply; both took their seats, and then he spoke.

“Emma,” he said, in a tone so solemn that it struck terror to her soul, she knew not wherefore—“Emma, this is a momentous period of your life, and every thing depends on the steps you take—”

“Why, Hiram, what *do* you mean—what *can* you mean?”

“Nothing to alarm you, but every thing to impress on you the fact that no time is to be lost. Your father has made the foolish resolution to give up all his private property to his creditors—”

“So he told mamma and me. Is not that right?”

“No, it is not right. It is wrong,” replied Hiram, in a harsh tone. “More than wrong—sinful—wicked, very wicked! Do you know who it is the Scripture says is worse than an infidel?”

“I do not,” she replied, faintly.

Hiram intended to frighten her, and he had succeeded.

“You do not! Well, it is the man who fails to provide for his own household. Why, we had the text in our Sunday-school lesson only three weeks ago.”

Emma sat paralyzed.

"Now, Emma," continued Hiram, "I want you to see your mother, and tell her what I say. Tell her your father is determined to ruin the whole of you—going to give up this very house—just think of that!"

"Papa has already told us so," said Emma, in a low, timid tone. "He says it is the only honorable course."

"Honorable!" exclaimed Hiram, pettishly. "Stuff—nonsense! I tell you that you are all crazy. You don't think what you are about. Wait till you are turned out of doors, bag and baggage—then see how you will feel! but then it will be too late. Do you understand?"

Emma Tenant was not a brilliant girl, but she had good sense and an honest nature. By degrees she recovered from the stupor into which Hiram's onslaught threw her; she began to feel something of her lover's purpose, and appreciate something of the position he might soon assume. Loving and trustful, these faint glimmerings of the truth appalled her. She did not cry any more. She became pale. She breathed short and quick.

"Hiram," she gasped, "you mean something—I fear you mean something. Papa knows best what is honest—better than you, a young man. To lose our property would make me unhappy, but I thought—yes, I conceived—O Hiram!—tell me—am I going to lose *you*?" she cried, interrupting herself. "If it be so, say it—say it now. Do not keep me in suspense."

"Why, Emma, how nervous you are! Ah, here comes your father.—I see you are waiting for me, sir. I am quite ready."

"Good! Emma, can you spare him for one evening? You will soon have him all to yourself—eh?" and, with a pleasant tap on her cheek, Mr. Tenant turned and left the room.

Hiram followed, without saying a word.

Emma sat by herself an hour—at least an hour. The servant came in to light the gas, but she would not permit it. I won't attempt to give her thoughts.

At length she rose, and took her way to her mother's room. She told her just what had passed. Mrs. Tenant was a superior woman. Her experience taught her, despite her good opinion of Hiram—for he had spared no pains to present himself favorably—that he might prove to be altogether mercenary. Yet she did not think it probable. She said all she consistently could say to soothe her child, without absolutely declaring that she believed her fears to be groundless. *That* she dared not utter. She finished by a very common and rational argument, which, by-the-way, has very little comfort in it:

"I know, my darling, that you love him, but you cannot love a mean, low-spirited creature; and if he prove to be such, let us be thankful for your escape."

She kissed and caressed her child—her only child. But her words were poor consolation to Emma, whose heart was devoted to this man—very meagre consolation. Mrs. Tenant knew it; but what could she say or do more, just then? She could only watch, and stand ready to protect her daughter's happiness, when events should decide what course she was to take.

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Hiram spent the entire evening looking over accounts and papers with Mr. Tenant. His manner was quiet but assiduous. Very useful he made himself. Frequently, in the course of the evening, he drew from that gentleman well-merited encomiums on his clear head and methodical ideas.

As he was about leaving—it was fully twelve o'clock, and Mr. Tenant had just thanked him for the twentieth time—Hiram ventured to speak again about his property.

“Dear sir, I feel impelled to speak once more to you. Do listen to me. Do not beggar yourself, and then turn yourself out of doors. Permit me to tell you that you can save this house very easily.”

“I know it, Hiram—I know it. Don't think I have forgotten Emma and you. I have thought it all over. Recollect, I don't blame you. I know it is Emma you are thinking about. But, my dear boy, I can't do it—it would not be *honest*. I can't do it. Never mind, we shall be all the happier for doing right—all the happier, all the happier. I will see you to-morrow. Good-night. God bless you!”

They had gradually got to the door, and Hiram, echoing the “good-night,” stepped into the street.

“‘God bless you,’ indeed,” he muttered. “Soft words but-ter no parsnips. ‘God bless you!’ What idle profanity!”

He walked slowly down the street, unconscious that a young face from a window of the second story watched his retreating steps—that a young heart beat painfully as he passed out of sight.

A few moments later, Emma's mother entered her room, and found her still at the window.



"Not yet in bed?" she said, tenderly. "I thought you left me because you were too much fatigued to sit up." She came and put her arms about her daughter's neck, and kissed her.

"My dear, I have joyful news for you. Your papa says Hiram takes just the right view of every thing; that nothing can be more satisfactory than his whole conversation. He explained all to Hiram, and he declares he never passed a happier evening in his life. Is not that worth coming to tell you of?"

"Indeed, it is, dear mamma."

"Now you can sleep?"

"Oh, yes."

But she did not sleep. It is not so easy to recover from a heart-shock such as she had just experienced. No, she did not sleep a moment during the night. Hiram's harsh, repulsive tone and manner haunted her. Oh, *how* they haunted her! Never before had he exhibited such traits. Whatever the future had in store for her, here was a revelation, sudden, unexpected, *true*.

. . . . .

Honest, simple-minded Mr. Tenant! How he is chattering away to his wife, repeating again and again his encomiums on Hiram till she is really convinced! Why should she not be?

Meanwhile, Hiram has reached his lodgings. He goes through with his devotions, and is soon sound asleep. From his composed manner it may be inferred that he has made up his mind just what course to take.

## CHAPTER IX.

"MR. MEEKER!"

There was no answer.

"Mr. Meeker!"

The accent was one of sudden distress and alarm. There was a short pause, when the call was renewed.

"Mr. Meeker!"

"What is it? What is the matter? Is any thing the matter?"

A slight groan.

Mr. Meeker sprang from his bed as if he were a young man, and made haste to light a candle.

"My dear, are you ill?"

"I don't know. It's something strange."

Mrs. Meeker's voice sounded so unnatural, that her husband hurried to the other side of the bed. He found his wife helpless, unable to change her position. Her articulation was very difficult, and her countenance presented a ghastly appearance, for one-half of her was completely paralyzed.

It was the work of a few moments to alarm the house, and despatch a messenger for the doctor. But what could a physician avail, when Nature refused longer to perform her office? The doctor could investigate, and the result

of his examination was most alarming. Voluntary action over one-half the frame quite suspended: what was worse, there was little or no sensation. The poor woman essayed to speak from time to time, but with repulsive contortions, so that her words sounded like idiotic babble. As her husband bent over her, she seized his arm with the hand still *live*, and with distinctness said—

“*Send for Hiram.*”

This was in time for the mail which closed in twenty minutes.

Hiram rose, the morning after the long session at Mr. Tenant's house, cool and refreshed by his undisturbed slumber. Arriving at his counting-room, he received, among his other correspondence, a letter, which read as follows:

“MY DEAR SON: Your mother has been taken alarmingly ill. Come home at once.

“Your affectionate father,

“F. MEEKER.”

What a load off Hiram's mind by the receipt of this brief note! The idea of a fond, devoted mother, struck down by a possibly fatal illness, did not present itself for an instant; or, if it did, it was without effect on him.

He breathed a deep *relieved* respiration, while he articulated, just above a whisper, “*How very Providential!*”

The New Haven boat left at one o'clock. Hiram spent a most active morning. Hill was summoned, and kept on the run all the time. No explanations, though, except “a sudden call out of town.” Arrangements were made which

looked to an absence prolonged into weeks. The bank was visited with reference to what might be required, and the news of his mother's dangerous illness turned to advantage in the most effective way.

All was ready.

It was just half-past twelve o'clock. Hiram sat down, and, taking up a torn piece of paper, scratched off a blurred and nearly unintelligible scrawl, as follows:

"12½ P. M.

"DEAR EMMA: I have this moment received the enclosed. I leave in fifteen minutes. Barely time to send this. H."

This note he despatched by a messenger, and went directly on board the boat. There he found his brother, Doctor Frank, who had also been summoned by his father, although not mentioned in Mrs. Meeker's request. The brothers shook hands. The Doctor's heart was softened by the afflictive intelligence, and Hiram felt in a very placable humor, in consequence of the "special interposition" that day in his behalf. They did not converse much, however. Hiram sat most of the time quietly in a corner of the boat, looking over various commercial papers; while Dr. Frank walked up and down the deck, enjoying the cool breeze, and the pleasant landscape presented on either side, notwithstanding the melancholy thoughts which were from time to time forced on him, in view of the alarming letter he had received. But he was familiar with disease and every corporeal malady. His nature was buoyant and sanguine. He had the confidence of a man of genius in his own powers,

and this did not permit any very grave doubts about the result of his mother's illness.

When Emma Tenant received Hiram's note, she had but one feeling, one sensation—that of earnest and profound sympathy from the bottom of a heart earnest and sympathetic.

"Poor Hiram!" she said to herself. "Poor, dear Hiram! He has been obliged to leave suddenly, without a word of consolation and kindness from me. And I was unkind to him last night—I know I was. Poor fellow!—but I will make up for it when he comes back. I will never distrust him again—never!"

The stage reached Hampton at the usual time. The passengers had ridden all night, and now descended, glum and stiff, to stretch their limbs for breakfast. A nice double wagon stood waiting; it was driven by the younger brother.

"How are you, Ned?" said the Doctor, first getting out. "How is mother?"

"Oh, very bad, Frank—very bad. Past all hope, the doctors say."

"What is it?"

"Paralysis."

"Good God! you don't tell me so?"

The other nodded.

All this time, Hiram stood calmly listening, but not saying a word. *He* was content. For he felt sure that he need not return to New York for at least three weeks, and—he was to be married in three weeks.

Dr. Frank was the first to enter the sick-room. Although a physician, accustomed to every form of disease, he was appalled at the change in his mother's appearance. On this, however, we will not dwell. Mrs. Meeker had been gradually sinking since the first attack.

She was quite sensible. Dr. Frank approached the bed, and kneeled down and addressed her tenderly.

The poor woman tried to articulate, and, after many efforts, she gasped—"Hiram!"

"He has come," replied Dr. Frank, "and will be with you in a moment."

This seemed to satisfy her, and the Doctor proceeded to investigate the case as far as was necessary. There could be but one conclusion—Mrs. Meeker was soon to pass away from the world. She was beyond the reach of medical aid.

Dr. Frank stepped into the sitting-room, and beckoned Hiram to go in. Then followed a very touching scene. When the mother became conscious of the presence of her darling boy, she essayed to give exhibitions of her feelings. It is impossible to describe these. To have him hold her lifeless hand—to endeavor to press his own with the one which was still in part vital—to pass her fingers over his face, and strive to put her arm around his neck,—seemed to render her perfectly happy. But her strength was soon exhausted, and she was obliged to rest. What appeared to afflict her most was, that she could not articulate with distinctness. She evidently wished to communicate with her son, but it was impossible. She did, however, give utterance to a few words, which were perhaps an index to her thoughts:

*"Good—be good—good man,"* were plainly intelligible.  
*"Too worldly—not"* . . . . . (the words were not audible).  
*"Treasure in heaven—in heaven."*

By which disconnected sentences one might hope, and, I think, reasonably infer that Mrs. Meeker, in view of that eternity for which she had been so long, as she thought, preparing, suddenly saw things in a new and different light, and desired effectually and lovingly to impress the same on her favorite child.

Hiram, during the interview, behaved like a model son—sorrowful, devoted, affectionate, pliant. But it would make you shudder if you could have looked into his heart. . . .

When his mother became exhausted, so as no longer to be sensible of his presence, he stole softly out of the room, and breathed long and freely, as one safely through with some difficult performance or operation.

Meanwhile, Dr. Frank was sitting with his father. The interview was very affecting. The old man had at no time been ready to believe the attending physician, who could give him no hope. When "Frank" came, *he* would know all about it. And so he did, but his knowledge could bring no comfort—only a confirmation of what had already been announced.

"She can't recover, father—she can't recover," and the stout man began to sob. In the presence of his parent he was again a child, and the latter instinctively became consoler. Mr. Meeker, as we have intimated, though old, was not infirm; and it was a curious sight to witness his efforts to comfort his boy, while he himself so much more required sympathy.

So the day passed. The second morning Dr. Frank was obliged to return to the city, for his patients demanded his presence. He first had a consultation with the attending physician. Nothing remained for Mrs. Meeker but wearisome days and nights till death should release her; and all that a medical man could do was to make her as comfortable as possible.

There was a small room adjoining the one where Mrs. Meeker lay, which Hiram took possession of. It had a pleasant window looking out on the garden, and it contained a small cot bedstead, besides a table and chairs. Here Hiram spent most of his time, busily occupied. By every mail he received letters from New York, detailing with minuteness just what took place in his affairs from day to day. In short, his private office was removed from New York to Hampton; and the only apparent inconvenience was, that he did business at arm's length, as they say. Daily came a letter from Hill, although Hill was not in Hiram's counting-room. Daily was an answer returned.

There was some one else who wrote Hiram just as regularly. Among the business letters, written in various hands and on various kinds of paper, could always be seen a small, neatly-folded sheet, having a refined and delicate superscription. It was from Emma Tenant. She had forgotten all that was unpleasant and disagreeable in their last interview, on receiving her lover's hurried-looking scrawl; and, as if by a sudden rebound, her sympathies were roused to an extraordinary degree for "poor Hiram—dear Hiram," whom she "treated so coldly" the last time they met. I need not



say her notes were full of the most tender sympathy and condolence.

These letters bored Hiram exceedingly. The second day after reaching Hampton he had written Emma another of his hastily-got-up epistles, which contained just six lines, stating that he had found his mother in a dying condition, and was watching at her bedside. He did not intend to write again; but Emma's letters were so persistent, that, in spite of his resolution, he did despatch two other notes, each more hasty and illegible, and more distracted in tenor, than the previous one. In fact, the last had no signature at all.

At length, Emma was so completely carried away by Hiram's distress, that she actually desired to proceed to Hampton, where she felt that her presence would act like a balm to his sorrowful and bruised heart. Her mother, of course, would permit no such indiscreet step; so that Emma had to rest satisfied with writing long, loving letters.

Hiram, meantime, was not without his harmless recreations.

[All the town seemed to have been informed how devoted Hiram was to his sick mother. Nobody knew, however, of the secret of the little room adjoining, and of our hero's busy hours there.]

In the cool of the afternoon he would take a walk into the village. He called on his old master, Benjamin Jessup, who still maintained the opposition store against the Smiths.

Jessup was the same good-natured, jovial fellow as ever; but all token of familiarity died away when Hiram, entering his place, saluted him with the quiet air and manner of recognized superiority—yet, as you would say, pleasantly

enough. The rich New York shipping-merchant inspired the country storekeeper with awe.

Hiram enjoyed all this vastly, and talked amiably with Jessup about old times. He walked complacently over the village, stopping every few steps to have a word with his numerous acquaintances.

One afternoon, as he was taking his usual walk to the village, and had nearly reached it, he met a lady whom at first he did not recognize, but who appeared to know him from a distance.

It was Mary Jessup—now Mrs. Mary Williams—who stopped the way, and whose face crimsoned as he approached. She had been married four or five years—well married, as we say. Her appearance had greatly improved. Her form was finely developed. She had become stouter, and was really more blooming than when she was a girl.

I have said she blushed ; but not from any sense of mortification, such as is not unfrequently experienced when one of the sex, feeling conscious that time has not dealt kindly with her, meets an old friend after a lapse of years, and dreads the first scrutinizing gaze. On the contrary, Mary Williams was fully sensible of her improved good looks, and this gave to her a certain self-possession of manner which prevented the least awkwardness on her part.

Still she blushed—from old recollections, doubtless, and because Hiram had never before greeted her as a married woman.

“Why, how do you do, Mr. Meeker? I am very glad to see you, even by accident. I heard of you at father's, and I think you might, for old acquaintance' sake, have

stepped in to see me. Mr. Williams, too—you used to know him—would be very glad to see you.”

Mrs. Williams was determined to have the first word, and she took advantage of it. She looked very handsome, and acted more and more at ease as she proceeded, especially after the reference to Mr. Williams.

[ Women always like to allude to their husbands in presence of an old admirer; as much as to say, “Don’t think I am without somebody to care for and protect me;” or, “Don’t fancy I mean to forget my husband because I choose to be chattering with you;” or—or—or—a dozen things else.]

Hiram replied in his old artful way, very seriously, and with an air of sadness (as he made allusion to his mother’s situation), yet with a touch of embarrassment (all assumed), while his voice betrayed a tenderness of feeling which it would seem impossible for him to restrain in consequence of the suddenness of the meeting.

“Is she indeed so ill?” asked Mrs. Williams. “We understood she was greatly afflicted by a stroke of paralysis, but I had no thought of immediate danger.”

“She cannot live,” replied Hiram, his lips quivering.

“Oh, Mr. Meeker, do not say that. I cannot bear to hear it. You know how attached I always was to your mother.”

“Call me Hiram,” was the response. “It will put me in mind of old times.”

“Well, I don’t know but it *is* more natural, for I don’t I have hardly set eyes on you since you left our house.”

Hiram sighed.

"Well, I suppose I shall not see you again for another five years; so I had best say, 'Good-by.'"

They were standing at a point where a lane led off from the main street.

"Which way are you going?" asked Hiram.

"Just a few steps down the lane, and then home."

"Shall you be detained long?"

"Only a minute. I have just to run into that house and leave a pattern, if you must know."

"Then I will walk along with you, if you have no objections. I am out for a little necessary exercise."

"Objections? Why, I shall be delighted."

They sauntered down the lane to the place indicated by Mrs. Williams, where a sign over the door—"Fashionable Dressmaker"—explained the feminine nature of her errand. Leaving there, the two walked on till they reached a spot where they used to stroll together in old times.

"Now I think of it," said Mrs. Williams, as she came out of the house and rejoined her companion, "I forgot to ask you if you are married; because, if you are, I need make no apology for marching you by a dressmaker's establishment."

"Don't you know whether I am married or not?"

"Why, how should I? I certainly think you ought to be by this time. Why don't you marry Miss Burns, or Louise Hawkins, or Charlotte, or—or—"

"Or whom?" asked Hiram.

"Oh, I dare say there are ever so many more—ever so many. So you are not married?"

"Do you think I am, Mary?"

. . . . .

As I was saying, the two sauntered on till they reached a spot that had been favorite ground for their sentimental strolls. Both knew well enough, when Hiram proposed to walk down the lane, where they would land, for it was in both their minds. Mrs. Williams fancied it would amuse her, and furnish a little variety. She was very sure of herself, and knew "just what a flirt Hiram was."

Hiram—but never mind what *he* thought.

. . . . .

Although the days were at their longest, it was quite dark before Mrs. Williams reached her own door. She entered it—after a hurried "Good-evening" to Hiram—flushed, excited, and with feelings generally disturbed. Contrary to her resolution, in opposition to her judgment—indeed, I may say, against her will—she listened to the old familiar accents, breathed in more impassioned tones than ever before, while relieved by a gloss of sentimental sadness.

What had she been doing, and where had the hours fled? To what was she listening, whose arm did she hold, and whose hand ventured to enclose hers?

[It was "only in sisterly friendship." That was Hiram's observation as he took it.]

Before she was aware of it, twilight was disappearing in the darkness. She started, and, quite recovering herself, commenced to walk hurriedly toward home. Hiram by no means relished the pace, but he was forced to keep up, and, as I have observed, with an abrupt "Good-evening" he was summarily dismissed.

He had enjoyed himself exceedingly, and he walked slowly toward his house, recalling every little word which, as he believed, disclosed the true state of Mary Williams's affections. Scoundrel that he was, he gave not a thought to what might be the consequence if he persevered in his wicked attempt to interest her. In fact, he made up his mind that it would cause the time to pass less heavily while he was detained in the neighborhood.

Do not suppose the calculating wretch intended to push the "flirtation" beyond what he called brotherly and sisterly conduct. Not he. There might otherwise arise some charge of criminality or wrong, which would endanger his position, or weaken his claims to the "kingdom."

Hiram reached home, and found his mother much worse. By signs, and every other manifestation in her power, she had intimated her wish to see him. Now she was quite speechless.

When Mrs. Williams entered her house, the "tea-table" was still spread, and her husband wondering what had become of her. Her little girl shouted in a joyful tone, as she came in, "Here is mamma!" and Mr. Williams's countenance was instantly lightened of its expression of suspense.

"Why, Mary, where have you been?"

For a moment, Mrs. Williams was on the point of fabricating an answer. But her better angel was on guard just then. The evil spell was broken, while she replied, with one of her pleasant laughs:

"You could never guess. I met Hiram Meeker on my way to the dressmaker's. You know he is here attending

on his mother. Well, we undertook to ramble over some of our old grounds; and, before I knew it, talking about old times, it was dark. More fool I, for wasting my time, and keeping tea waiting."

"Why did he not come in?"

"To tell you the truth, I never asked him. I was so frightened when I saw how late it was, that I hurried away home, and left him at the door to do the same."

Mary Williams was relieved. She went about the duties of her household with a light heart. And Hiram Mecker, during his stay at Hampton, found no further opportunity for "brotherly conferences" with her.

## CHAPTER X.

MRS. MEEKER died the next week.

The funeral took place on the day which had been fixed for Hiram's marriage with Emma Tenant. After it was over, William Meeker removed with his wife from the small house to live with his father; and I will say here that both contributed much to make Mr. Meeker's latter days happy.

Hiram did not wait an hour, but took the stage the same afternoon; while Dr. Frank remained with his father over the next day.

One morning, two or three days after his return, Hiram presented himself at the house and inquired for *Mrs.* Tenant. On this occasion he was cased in a complete suit of the deepest black, with crape reaching to the very top of his hat. He was the picture of despairing grief.

It happened that Emma was out, so that Mrs. Tenant was not surprised that she should be sent for. She was not aware that Hiram had not inquired for her daughter. She came in with the impression that he was all that he should be; his failure to write often being thought quite excusable under the circumstances.

She had not, however, advanced three steps into the room, before *feeling* that there was something wrong.



Hiram, regarded in a certain light, presented a most comical though most lugubrious appearance. He was so completely acting a part, that his very looks and gestures, and, in short, the minutest movements of his body, were manifestly "got up." One would think an automaton had been employed and set to work to do a certain amount of mourning, and furnish the requisite quantity of family grief.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Tenant advanced and greeted Hiram cordially.

He put out the tips of his fingers, produced his pocket-handkerchief, as if to be ready for an overflow, but uttered no word—no articulate sound.

This continued for at least five minutes, Mrs. Tenant endeavoring to say something the while by way of condolence.

"I shall never recover from the shock," at last he ejaculated—"never!"

He did not look Mrs. Tenant in the face, but kept his eyes fixed on vacancy.

"I am very sorry Emma is not in, but you will not have to wait long," remarked Mrs. Tenant at last.

"I do not think I shall be able to see her," said Hiram, with a groan.

"Not see her—not see Emma! Why, what do you mean?" exclaimed the mother, in amazement.

"This is no period to devote myself to things of time and sense. I feel that all my thoughts should be centred on eternity."

[You should have seen the activity Hiram had been displaying in his counting-room since his return.]

This was enough for Mrs. Tenant. She understood him now, and determined to bring matters at once to a crisis.

"Mr. Meeker," she said, "will you be so kind as to step with me into the library for a few minutes?"

Hiram acquiesced.

She rang the bell, and said to the servant—

"When Miss Tenant comes in, request her to go to my room, and wait for me there.

"Now, Mr. Meeker," she said, as soon as they were seated, "let me ask you a plain question: Is it your intention to break your engagement with my daughter?"

"Really, ma'am, I do not wish to speak on the subject at present," whimpered Hiram, looking at the crape on his hat.

"But you must, you *shall* speak! Do you think you can trifle with me, sir?"

Hiram was silent.

"SPEAK, I say! Do you intend to keep your engagement with my daughter?"

Thus invoked, Hiram murmured something about—"Under the circumstances"—his "great affliction"—"change in your own family"—"business troubles"—"not sure of his own situation"—"perhaps it would be best not to consider it a positive engagement"—"that is, for the present"—"after a season, should—"

The street-door bell rang, and Mrs. Tenant heard not another word. Her heart scarcely beat as she listened to the footsteps of the old servant along the hall. Agitated by a rush of tumultuous emotions, she was unable to breathe during the short parley between Emma and the domestic.

At length she heard the welcome sound of Emma's step up the staircase, and she drew a long, full breath. Then she started up and rang the bell sharply, yes, furiously, and remained standing till the servant, with quickened pace, came in.

"William, show Mr. Meeker the door!"

Hiram sprang to his feet. He did not like the general *look* matters were assuming.

"Go!" said Mrs. Tenant, pointing to the entrance.

In less than a quarter of a minute, Hiram was walking down the street.

"It is over with, anyhow," he muttered.

But, for once in his life, he felt very small. "To be turned out of doors by a woman! Still, nobody will know it," he added.

He was soon busy in his counting-room, examining one of Hill's invoices.

. . . . .

Mrs. Tenant threw herself on the sofa, and was apparently lost in thought for several minutes. Then she rose and went to her daughter.

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## CHAPTER XI.

WHAT should she say to her?

She had decided in the brief period of reflection before leaving the room.

Amputation, sudden and quick—then treatment, as a surgeon would express it.

“Emma, it is all over with. Mr. Mecker has been here and has broken off his engagement with you. The reason is, because your father has lost his property. I shall never regret our misfortunes, since it has saved you from becoming the wife of a selfish, heartless wretch.”

Emma did not faint, or scream, or burst into tears; but she turned very pale, and sat without speaking, as if expecting her mother to say something more.

Mrs. Tenant looked at her anxiously. She would have much preferred a demonstration of some sort to silence—silence and pallor. She continued :

“Emma, you are our only child, our all. We think of your happiness more than of any thing else in this world. Your mother is with you now ; she will help you and sustain you until you have recovered, as you soon will, from the effect of this sudden shock.”

“And he said it was because papa had failed?” inquired Emma, without appearing to notice what her mother was saying.

"Exactly."

"Then it was because he thought I was rich that he wanted to marry me?"

"For nothing else in the world," replied Mrs. Tenant, impatiently.

Emma was again silent, but she was no longer pale; on the contrary, the color was fast filling her cheeks, and she blushed as she said, in a low tone, "I shall feel so mortified to go into church."

Mrs. Tenant was delighted. A great point was gained. Emma was already brought back to ordinary considerations; her pride would rally now.

"Never mind, my darling, never mind; for once it may be a little awkward, but, after all, what do *we* care?"

Very commonplace, to be sure, but it was all she could say.

"Everybody was aware the wedding-day was fixed. Then, you know, I had to explain why it was put off to Ellen Stanley and Julia Petit, for they were to be my bridesmaids. This morning I met Ellen, and she asked me when it was to be, and I told her Hi—Mr. Meeker had not yet returned. She declared she saw him on the corner of Bond street and Broadway, day before yesterday morning. She said she could not be mistaken. I told her she *was* mistaken. Now I dare say she *did* see him. What *shall* I do? Everybody will have the story, and how they will laugh at me!"

"We will see about that, we will see," said Mrs. Tenant.

The fact is, she did not know exactly what to reply.

"I shall be ashamed to show myself in the street."

"Nonsense, my darling."

Kissing her daughter cheerfully, Mrs. Tenant went downstairs to meet her husband, whom she heard at the door.

The moment her mother left, Emma's heart sank, and she began to cry.

Mrs. Tenant was not long in putting her husband in possession of the facts. He was astonished, of course. He asked a great many questions, and at last seemed to comprehend how matters stood. He appeared to be very deeply affected, though he said but little. He did not speak on the subject to Emma, but soon after dinner took his hat and walked out.

In a short time he was standing on the steps of Dr. Chellis's house, and had rung the bell. He was presently seated in the Doctor's "study" (he declined to go into the drawing-room), waiting for him to come in.

Now it so happened that Dr. Chellis and Mr. Tenant were schoolmates at Exeter Academy, and afterward classmates at Dartmouth. More than this, for two years they roomed together. Young Tenant did not have much taste for study, but his father, a man of competence, desired his son to be "educated," even if it should be decided to make a merchant of him. It was perhaps because the young men were so unlike, that they took to each other from the first and became intimate. There was something in Tenant's honest and amiable nature, which was exceedingly attractive to the earnest, uncompromising Chellis. Their intimacy was a matter of surprise and marvel to all, yet I think is easily accounted for on the hypothesis just mentioned. That Tenant maintained a respectable standing in his class he owed to Chellis, for it was their habit to go over their

lessons together after Chellis had "dug out" his, and, thus fortified, Tenant's recitations were very fair.

The young men never lost sight of each other. With them it continued always to be "Aleck" and "Harry." Whenever the young clergyman came to New York he was received at the house of the young merchant with open arms. After some years, opportunity was presented for "Harry," to wit, Mr. Henry Tenant, of the leading house of Allwise, Tenant, & Co., to use his influence in his church, where the pulpit had become vacant, to have "Aleck," to wit, the Rev. Alexander Chellis, called to fill it. The latter received the invitation with pleasure, for it opened to him a field he longed to enter. There was one drawback. He had not sufficient means to properly furnish a city house, where matters are on a scale so much more expensive than in the country.

He came down to consult his friend. After a full discussion they retired, the clergyman still not persuaded he could accept, and really most unwilling to decline.

The next morning, the merchant was up very early, and bolting into his friend's room, he woke him from a sound slumber, exclaiming, "Aleck, I have got to be absent to-day—shall not be in till evening; but I have thought your affair all over, and decided that you must come, and that forthwith. As to the little objection which troubles you, here is what will obviate it; and mind you, Aleck, if you ever allude to this circumstance, either to me or to any living being, I swear, by Jupiter Ammon, your favorite old heathen, that I will never again recognize you as friend."

Thus delivering himself, he thrust a check for a thousand dollars into the hands of the astonished clergyman, who lay listening to his harangue, fully convinced his friend was actually out of his wits.

The next instant the door was closed ; and rubbing his eyes to satisfy himself he was not dreaming, he examined the piece of paper in his hand, and read it forward and backward, upside down, and right side up, until he actually began to comprehend what it meant. More than this, he fully appreciated the act, and accepted it ; and, further, he never did allude to the circumstance, not even so much as to thank his friend.

It is true, when the latter came back that evening, and the two shook hands, that Harry felt a peculiar pressure, and observed a remarkable expression of Aleck's eyes, which he fancied for the moment were moist.

So Mr. Chellis was ordained over the church in New York.

Years ran by. He became a famous divine, justly celebrated through town and country. We know the position Mr. Tenant enjoyed. The two always maintained their old intimacy. When alone together, it was still "Aleck" and "Harry." College jokes were repeated, college days lived over, and, while together, it would seem that neither was a day the older for the years that had rolled over them.

It is not to be wondered at, then, that on receiving the unlooked-for intelligence of Hiram Meeker's conduct, Mr. Tenant should desire to consult his old friend, and lay the case before him.

Apologizing for keeping the reader so long on the thresh-



old of Dr. Chellis's study, we will now enter with him, and report the conference.

"Aleck, I am in trouble." That was the first remark after the greeting.

Never before had Mr. Tenant made such an observation to his friend. The old merchant had borne his failure like a man, accepting it as a part of the "fortune of war." He neither whimpered nor made wry faces. So, when Dr. Chellis heard the words, "Aleck, I am in trouble," he knew they meant a great deal. He took his seat, not in his accustomed place, but on the sofa, close to his friend, and, turning on him an anxious, sympathizing look, he said, in a tone gentler than a woman's, "What is it, Harry?"

"Harry" told him the whole. The burden of all his thoughts was his daughter, and his lip quivered when he spoke of her love for the man who had proved to be so base, and of the effect the disappointment might have on her.

When he had concluded, Dr. Chellis started to his feet, and began to pace up and down the room with great energy, exclaiming, "God be praised! God be praised! God be praised!"

"For what, Aleck, for what?" inquired Mr. Tenant, rising anxiously from his seat, and attempting to place himself before his friend, and thus intercept a response; "do tell me for what?"

This time they met in the middle of the room; the Doctor, no longer avoiding his companion, responded with emphasis, "For the escape! I tell you, Harry, it should be the happiest day of your life! yes, the happiest day of your life! Do you hear me?"

For Mr. Tenant did not appear to comprehend what the other was saying.

"I tell you," continued the Doctor, "Emma's engagement has been a perpetual source of sorrow to me. Yet I had nothing definite to urge against it—nothing, in fact, but what might be called a prejudice, which it would have been unjust to speak of—and—but—the fact is, I knew," burst forth the now fairly enraged Doctor, interrupting himself, and marching off again at double-quick; "I knew the fellow was a scamp, ever since he came whimpering to me about his conviction and God's providence, wonderful conversion, and so on. Conversion! I'll convert him!"

The Doctor's right hand opened and shut as if enclosing in its grasp the collar of Hiram's coat.

Mr. Tenant meantime kept standing in the middle of the room, trying in vain to bring the Doctor again to a halt, as he walked rapidly past him.

Whether he would have succeeded will not be known, for a knock at the door served to effect the purpose, while his sharp, angry "Come in" so terrified the servant-girl that she opened it barely wide enough to enable her to announce, in a faint tone, "Mr. Meeker."

"Ask him into the parlor," said the Doctor, in his natural voice, "I will see him presently."

Turning, in his usual manner, he bade his friend sit. Both resumed their places on the sofa, and the Doctor proceeded:

"Harry, it is all settled. The whole thing is clear. It comes just in the right time. Maria is to sail for Europe next week. You know how fond she is of Emma. It was but yesterday she was saying how pleasant it would be if

Emma could go with her. Then she supposed it impossible. Now it is all right. The young people are to be absent six or eight months. This will make Emma herself again. Now, then, we have decided, you must let me have my session with that knave yonder."

"But Aleck! Aleck!" exclaimed Mr. Tenant, making an effort to stop his friend, who was about to leave the room, "you forget—you forget my altered circumstances. Much as I like the plan, the thing is impossible—really quite impossible."

The doctor turned on his companion impatiently. "That's my affair," he said. "Mind that Emma is ready."

"No, no, Aleck—no, no; that must not be. No, no."

The Doctor looked as if about to make an assault on his friend. Raising his finger in a menacing manner, "Who was it," he exclaimed fiercely, "that with rude force burst into my room one morning, disturbing my slumbers, and committing various acts of violence, while I was in a defenceless state, unable to resist—who was it?"

The Doctor's eyes glared with such a genuine expression of rage, that Mr. Tenant lost his self-possession, and, as if afraid to admit the charge, answered faintly:

"I don't know."

"You lie, you dog—you know you do," said the Doctor, relaxing his angry tone. "Ah! Harry, I did not think it of you."

This last remark was uttered in the old familiar, gentle voice, and was accompanied by a look—just such a look as he had given him on the evening of the memorable affair of the thousand dollar check.

Tears came into Mr. Tenant's eyes.

"Come, come," said the Doctor, "don't be foolish; away with you, and let me attend to my business."

They shook hands silently, and the Doctor, closing the door after his friend, went back to his study, rang the bell, and directed Hiram to be summoned.

Mrs. Tenant received the account which her husband brought her of his visit to Dr. Chellis, and what had been decided on, with the liveliest satisfaction. She went at once to her daughter's apartment (she had thought best to leave her to herself for the evening), and exclaimed:

"Emma, my child, what do you think your papa has done? He has arranged for you to go with the Chaunceys to Europe next week. You know Maria was telling you Monday, that if you were not going to be married, she should insist on your accompanying her. Now tell me, Emma, are you not delighted?"

Emma *was* delighted, or rather she was greatly relieved. She had more sensitiveness and more pride than one would suppose, judging from her amiable disposition. Her position had always been so well assured, her society so much sought for, and she so much courted, that never, until this occasion, had she experienced any important trial of her temper or emotions.

To appear in society, the daughter of a bankrupt, jilted, and jilted because she was no longer an heiress, exposed to the various remarks and busy gossip so rife on such occasions, was it not trying? And do you wonder that it was a great relief for her to know that she was to be freed from

this ordeal; that she was to experience not only a complete change of scene, but the change was to be every way agreeable, and what she would, under ordinary circumstances, have most desired?

To visit Europe! In those days the affair was not one of such common occurrence as at present, and of course the trip was the more valued.

Bravo, Emma! Next Thursday you will be on the ocean, away from every disagreeable association. Much as we shall miss you, we must bid you good-by for the present.

Emma did not close her eyes in sleep that night, and if her heart beat with excitement at the thought of the sudden change in her destinies, immediate as well as remote, there were moments when its pulses were deadened, and a thick, brooding, unhappy melancholy took possession of it, as she thought of what she had lost. A pang—it was that of *disappointed love*—from time to time made itself felt with keenness, and the morning found her restless and ill at ease. Could it be otherwise?

. . . . .

When Hiram received the summons to attend Dr. Chellis in his study, he was in the midst of a calculation as to the profit and loss of a certain operation, which I do not propose to explain to the reader. He had intended to call on the Doctor immediately on his return from Hampton, but was too much occupied. When, however, he came to a sudden break with Mrs. Tenant (*he* did not intend it should be sudden), he felt the necessity of fortifying himself in the church, for he was well aware of the deservedly high character Mr. Tenant enjoyed in it. He did not know the

intimate relations which existed between him and the Doctor.

Although the weather was exceedingly warm, Hiram wore his complete suit of black cloth, and as he came with downcast eyes and mincing steps into the Doctor's room, the latter, who had taken his accustomed seat before his table, looked at him as he would at some strange and extraordinary apparition. He returned Hiram's salutation so gravely that it checked any further advance toward shaking hands. He proceeded, however, to take a seat without waiting to be asked.

"Something wrong," he said to himself. "It can't be he has heard of it so soon—only this very afternoon; impossible. Perhaps he is at work on his sermon. I must apologize."

Thereupon Hiram took courage, and said, in a bland tone:

"I fear I am interrupting you in your valuable labors; shall I call another time?"

"I am quite at liberty;" and the Doctor looked as if he would ask, "What do you want?"

"You have, without doubt, heard of my affliction," groaned Hiram, producing his pocket handkerchief.

"Your mother died lately, I understand."

Hiram's answer was inaudible; his face was buried in his handkerchief.

The Doctor was becoming impatient.

"What is the object of your visit?" he asked.

The handkerchief was instantly removed from Hiram's face. He cast his eyes reproachfully on the Doctor, and exclaimed, quite in a natural tone:

"Object, are you not my pastor; am I not suffering? Have I not been watching for weeks at my mother's dying bed? And now she is gone, I feel unhappy, very unhappy. I want your advice and sympathy, and spiritual direction."

The Doctor was staggered—I say staggered, not convinced, not persuaded, not in any sense inclined to change his opinion of the young man before him. But a blow had been well put in, and he felt it.

For Hiram, not imagining the Doctor could have heard of the affair with Miss Tenant, thought his treatment owing to some sort of caprice, and he seized the opportunity to act on the offensive, and dealt so genuine a retort that the former was taken by surprise.

For a moment he seemed to be in a reverie.

"You have lost your mother," he said, dreamily, while his large features worked with an involuntary movement, betraying strong inward emotion—"your mother; an irreparable loss. Tell me, Meeker," he continued, after a pause, while he turned his large, searching gray eyes on the young man, "tell me, did you really love your mother?"

It would have been, one would suppose, the easiest thing in the world for the glib-tongued Hiram to reply to such an interrogatory; but there was something awful in that gaze—not severe, nor stern, nor condemnatory, but awful in its earnest, truthful, not to be escaped penetration.

He hesitated, he stammered, he changed color. Still those eyes regarded him—still Hiram continued to hesitate and stammer, till some sort of response came out, by piecemeal, incoherently.

Meantime the Doctor had recovered from his reverie.

"You have been very unhappy?" he asked, in a dry tone.

"Oh yes, very."

"What have you to say about your relations with Miss Tenant?"

"He has heard all about it," thought Hiram, "and I must do the best I can." "Why, sir, in my present afflicted state, how could I form so important a tie as that of matrimony? So it was thought best by Mrs. Tenant that the engagement should be considered at an end, at least for the present. This was her own suggestion, I assure you."

"Look you, Meeker," said Dr. Chellis, endeavoring to restrain his anger, "I have heard the other side of this story, and had you not called on me, I should have sent for you. I cannot permit such a course as you are charged with to go without the action of the church."

"By what right does the church undertake to supervise my domestic affairs?" retorted Hiram, roused, and at bay.

"The church will always take official notice of misconduct on the part of any of its members."

"With what am I charged?" demanded Hiram, defiantly.

"With violation of the most sacred of promises, with prevarication, dissimulation, and moral fraud."

"Since it is determined to prejudice me, I shall ask for a letter of dismission, and worship elsewhere."

"I cannot grant you a letter while you are under charges."

"And do you call it fair to persecute in this way, at the instigation of a proud aristocrat (he had already learned this slang sophistry), a young man, who is almost a stranger among you?"

"Meeker," said the Doctor, once more relaxing into a



meditative tone, "Meeker, you have asked for my advice and spiritual direction: Answer me, answer me truly; have you really no idea, at least to some extent, what sort of person you are?"

"Dr. Chellis, I will no longer sit here to be insulted by you, sir. I have borne quite too much, already. I will endure it no longer. Good evening, sir."

Hiram flung himself out of the room. He was not at all angry, though he affected to be. Things were working heavily against him, and he saw no way to retreat except to fly in a passion or appear to do so. Once out of the house, he breathed more freely, and hastening home, he without delay set about the labor of reconstruction. He had uphill work, but difficulties brought out his resources.

His first step was to make a written request for a letter of dismissal, on the ground that he was about to remove to the church of the Rev. Dr. Pratt.

The request for a letter was refused, and Hiram's course thereon is of a character so important that it deserves to be treated of in a separate chapter.

Meanwhile Emma Tenant is safely across the Atlantic. Amid new and interesting scenes, which she is already beginning to enjoy, she tries to forget her heart's first grief.

She will succeed. To aid her, she has her woman's pride against her woman's weakness; a succession of fresh and novel incidents, agreeable society, absence from old associations, the natural buoyancy of youth, and a hopeful nature.

Over this host of fortunate circumstances presides that unconquered and always successful leader—TIME.

## CHAPTER XII.

HIRAM was never in serious difficulty before.

When he came carefully to survey the "situation," he felt greatly embarrassed, and in real distress.

To understand this, you have only to recollect what value he placed on church-membership. In this he was perfectly sincere. He felt, too, as he afterward expressed it to Mr. Bennett, that he had not "acted just right toward Emma Tenant;" but he had not the least idea that the matter could possibly become a subject of church discipline. The day for such extraordinary supervision over one's private affairs had gone by, it is true; but Dr. Chellis, roused and indignant, would no doubt revive it on this occasion, as he threatened to do.

Hiram had absented himself the first Sunday after his interview with his clergyman, but on the following he ventured to take his accustomed seat. The distant looks and cold return to his greeting which he received from the principal members of the congregation, were unmistakable. Even the female portion, with whom he was such a favorite, had evidently declared against him.

He had gone too far.

However, he went into Sunday-school, and took his accustomed seat with the class under his instruction. It was

the first time he had been with it since he left town to attend on his mother. The young gentleman who had assumed a temporary charge of this class, which was one of the finest in the school, shook hands with cool politeness with Hiram, but did not offer to yield the seat. The latter, already nervous and ill at ease by reason of his reception among his acquaintances, did not dare assume his old place, lest he should be told that he had been superseded. He contented himself with greeting his pupils, who appeared glad to see him, and sitting quietly by while they recited their lesson. Then, taking advantage of the few moments remaining, he gave them a pathetic account of the loss of his mother, and exhorted them all to honor and obey their parents.

In the afternoon he did not go back to church, but went to hear Dr. Pratt, the clergyman who, the reader may recollect, had been recommended by Mr. Bennett on Hiram's first coming to New York. Our hero was not at all pleased with this latter gentleman. The fact is, to a person of Hiram's keen intellect, a man like Dr. Chellis was a thousand times more acceptable than this milk-and-water divine.

From Dr. Pratt's, Hiram proceeded to his room, to reflect on his position; and, as we said at the beginning of the chapter, he found himself in serious difficulty, greatly embarrassed, and in real distress. He could not join another church, for a letter had been formally refused from his own. He could not remain where he was, for the feeling there was too strong against him; besides, evidently, Dr. Chellis was determined to institute damaging charges against him.

He thought of attempting to make friends with Mr. and Mrs. Tenant, and humbly asking them to intercede for him; but the recollection of his last interview with Mrs. Tenant discouraged any hope of success. Emma, alas! was away, far away, else he would go and appeal to her—not to reinstate him as her accepted, but—to aid him to get right with Dr. Chellis!

Such were some of the thoughts that went through his brain as he sat alone by his open window quite into the twilight. He felt worse and worse. Prayer did not help him, and every chapter which he read in the Bible added to his misery. At last it occurred to him to step to his cousin's house, not far distant, and talk the whole matter over with him.

Although Mr. Bennett's family were out of town during the summer, he was obliged to remain most of the season, on account of his business. Up to this time, Hiram had not mentioned the fact of the breaking his engagement; indeed, he had avoided the subject whenever the two had met, because he knew he was wrong, and there was something about Mr. Bennett, notwithstanding his shrewd mercantile habits, which was very straightforward and above-board, and which Hiram disliked to encounter. Besides, he had always been praised by his cousin for his tact and management, and he felt exceedingly mortified at being obliged to confess himself cornered. But something must be done, and that speedily. Yes, he would go and consult him.

Hiram took his hat and walked slowly to Mr. Bennett's house. He found him extended on a sofa in his front parlor, quite alone and in the dark, enjoying a fine Havana

cigar. It was by its light that Hiram was enabled to discover the smoker.

"Why, Hiram, is it you? Glad to see you!"—so his greeting ran. "Didn't know you ever went out Sunday evenings except to church. Take a cigar—oh, you don't smoke. It's deuced lonesome here without the folks. Must try and get off for a week or two myself. Why didn't I think to ask you to come and stay with me? Well, we will have some light on the occasion, and a cup of tea." And he rose to ring the bell.

"Not just yet, if you please," said Hiram, checking the other. "I want to have some conversation with you. I need your advice. I am in trouble."

By a singular coincidence, these were the very words which Mr. Tenant employed when he went to consult his friend Dr. Chellis. As Hiram differed totally from Mr. Tenant, so did the wholesale dry-goods merchant from the Doctor. Both were first-rate advisers in their way: the Doctor in a humane and noble sort, after his kind; the merchant in a shrewd, adroit, quick-witted, fertile manner, after his kind.

Mr. Bennett and Hiram both sat on the sofa, even as the Doctor and Mr. Tenant had sat together. It was quite dark, as I have said, and this gave Hiram a certain advantage in telling his story, for he dreaded his cousin's scrutinizing glance.

Mr. Bennett was much alarmed at Hiram's announcement. "In trouble?" What could that mean, but financial disaster?

"I was afraid he would venture too much," said Mr.

Bennett to himself; "but how could he have got such a blow as this? I saw him the day after his return, and he said every thing had gone well in his absence."

He settled himself, however, resolutely to hear the worst, and, to his praise be it spoken, fully determined to do what he could to aid the young man in his difficulties.

Hiram was brief in his communication. When he chose, he could go as straight to the point as any one. He did not attempt to gloss over his story, but put his cousin in possession of the facts pretty much as the reader understands them.

It is doubtful if Mr. Bennett was much relieved by the communication. Indeed, I think he would have preferred to have some pecuniary tangle out of which to extricate his cousin. In fact, it was impossible for him to suppress a feeling of contempt, not to say disgust, at Hiram's conduct. For, worldly-minded as he was, it was what he never would have been guilty of. Indeed, it so happened that Mr. Bennett had actually married his wife under circumstances quite similar, three months after her father's failure, and one month after his death; and where he expected a fortune, he had taken a portionless girl and her widowed mother. What is more, he did it cheerfully, and was, as he used to say, the happiest fellow in the world in consequence.

It would have been singular, therefore, if, while hearing Hiram's story, he had not recurred to his own history. In indulging contempt for him, he unconsciously practised an innocent self-flattery.

He did not immediately reply after Hiram concluded, but

waited for this feeling to subside, and for the old worldly leaven to work again.

"A nice mess you're in," he said, at length, "and all from not seeking my advice in time. Do you know, Hiram, you have made a great mistake in giving up that girl? I'm not talking of any matter of affection or sentiment or happiness, or about violating pledges and promises. That is your own affair, and I've nothing to do with it. I have often told you that you have much to learn, and here is a tremendous blunder to prove it. The connection would have been as good as a hundred thousand dollars cash capital, if the girl hadn't a cent. That clique is a powerful one, and they all hang together. Mark my words: they won't let the old man go under, and it would have been a fortune to you to have stood by him. You've taken a country view of this business, Hiram. There, every man tries to pull his neighbor down. Here, we try to build one another up."

"You are doubtless correct," replied Hiram; "but the mischief is done, and I want you to help me to remedy it. If you can't aid me, nobody can."

Mr. Bennett was not insensible to the compliment.

"Certainly, certainly," he answered; "you know you can count on me. I have always told you that you could, and I meant what I said. But you must permit me to point out your mistakes, and I tell you you should have asked my advice in this affair."

"Very true."

"You think Dr. Chellis won't yield?"

"I am sure of it."

Mr. Bennett sat fixed in thought for at least five minutes,

during which time, I am inclined to think, Hiram's countenance, could it have been seen through the darkness, would have been a study for an artist; for it doubtless exhibited (because it could *not* be seen) his actual feelings and anxieties.

He was startled at last into an exclamation by receiving an unexpected slap on his shoulder, which came from Mr. Bennett, who, rising at that moment, gave this as a token of having arrived at a happy solution of the difficulty. In this respect he was as abrupt as Dr. Chellis had been with his friend.

"The thing is settled. There is but one course to pursue, and you must take it. I will explain when we can have more light on the subject, to say nothing of our cup of tea."

He rang the bell; the parlor was lighted, and tea served, when Mr. Bennett again broke the silence.

"Hiram," he said abruptly, "you must quit the Presbyterian Church."

Hiram's heart literally stopped beating; he turned deadly pale.

Mr. Bennett perceived it. "Don't be frightened," he said. "You have made a great mistake, and I would help you repair it. I repeat, you must quit the Presbyterian Church, and you must join ours. You must, indeed," he continued, seeing Hiram look undecided.

"Does it teach the true salvation?" asked Hiram, doubtfully.

"How can you ask such a question?" replied Mr. Bennett, in a severe tone. "Are we not in the apostolic line?



Are not the ordinances administered by a clergy whose succession has never been broken? You—you Presbyterians, may possibly be saved by the grace of God, but you really have no church, no priesthood, no ordinances. We won't discuss this. I will introduce you to our clergyman, and you shall examine the subject for yourself. Perhaps you don't know it, Hiram, but I have been confirmed; yes, I was confirmed last spring. When I had that fit of sickness in the winter, I thought more about these matters than I ever did before, and I came to the conclusion that it was my duty to be confirmed. I have felt much more comfortable ever since, I assure you. My wife, you know, is a strict churchwoman. She and you will agree first rate if you come with us. For my part, I don't pretend to be so very exact. I believe in the spirit more than the letter, and our clergyman don't find any fault with me. What say you—will you call on him? If yes, I will open up a little plan which I have this moment concocted for your particular benefit. But you must first become a churchman."

Hiram sat stupefied, horrified, in a trance, in a maze. Cast loose from his church, within whose pale he was accustomed to think salvation could only be found, the idea of seeking it in any other quarter nearly took away his senses.

He had been accustomed to regard the Episcopalians as little better than Papists, and *they* were the veritable children of wrath. Could he have been mistaken? He was now willing to hope so. It could certainly do no harm to confer with the clergyman. He would hear what he had to say, and then judge for himself, and so he told his cousin.

"All right! you talk like a sensible man. Now, Hiram, between us two, I am going to find you a wife."

Hiram started.

"Yes, I will find you a wife; that is, if you will do what I advise you, instead of following your own head. I tell you what it is, Hiram—you're green in these matters."

Our hero smiled an incredulous smile, and asked, in a tone which betrayed a good deal of interest, "Who is the young lady?"

"Never mind who she is, until you come over to us; then my wife shall introduce you. But I'll tell you this much, Hiram: she has a clear two hundred thousand dollars—no father, no mother, already of age, in our first society, and very aristocratic."

"Is she pious?" asked Hiram, eagerly.

"Excessively so. The fact is, she is the strictest young woman in the church in—Lent. She belongs to all the charitable societies, and gives away I don't know how much."

"Humph!" responded Hiram. The last recommendation did not seem specially to take with him. Still, his eyes glistened at the recital. He could not resist asking several questions about the young lady, but Mr. Bennett was firm, and would not communicate further till Hiram's decision was made.

Thus conversing, they fell into a pleasant mood, and so the evening wore away. When Hiram rose to leave, he found it was nearly midnight. His cousin insisted that he should remain with him, and Hiram was glad to accept the invitation. He did not feel like returning to his solitary

room with his mind unsettled and his feelings discomposed.

In a most confidential mood the two walked up-stairs together; and Mr. Bennett bade Hiram "Good-night" in a tone so cheerful, that the latter entered his room quite reassured. He proceeded, as was his habit, to read a chapter in the Bible; but his teeth chattered when, on opening the volume, he discovered it to be—the Prayer-Book!—something he had been accustomed to hold in utter abomination. He controlled his feelings sufficiently to glance through it; and at last, selecting a chapter from the Psalter, he perused it and retired.

He dreamed that he was married to the rich girl, and had the two hundred thousand dollars safe in his possession. So real did this seem, that he woke in the morning greatly disappointed to find himself minus so respectable a sum.

"I must not lose the chance," said Hiram to himself, as he jumped out of bed. "With that amount in cash I would teach all South street a lesson. I wonder if this is the true church, after all?" and he took up the Prayer-Book this time without fear, as if determined to find out.

He spent some time in reading the prayers, and confessed to himself that they were quite unobjectionable. Mr. Bennett's declaration that there was no certainty of salvation out of the *church* (that is, *his* church), was not without its effect. As Hiram sought religion for the purpose of security on the other side, you can readily suppose any question of the validity of his title would make him very nervous; once convinced of his mistake, he would hasten to another

church, just as he would change his insurance policies when satisfied of the insolvency of the company which had taken his risks.

After breakfast, Hiram renewed the subject of the last night's conversation, and Mr. Bennett was pleased to find that his views were already undergoing a decided change.

"Now, Hiram," he exclaimed, "if you do come over to us, it's no reason you should join my own church. You may not like our clergyman. You know, when you first came to New York, I recommended you to go to Dr. Pratt's instead of Dr. Chellis's; but you wanted severe preaching, and you have had it. Now there are similar varieties among the Episcopalians. Dr. Wing, though a strict Churchman, will give you sharp exercise, if you listen to him. He will handle you without gloves. He is fond of using the sword of the spirit; and you had best stand from under, or he will cleave you through and through! My clergyman, Mr. Myrtle, is a very different man. He believes in the Gospel as a message of peace and love, and his sermons are beautiful. One feels so safe and happy to hear him discourse of the mercy of God, and the joys of heaven!"

"Nevertheless," replied Hiram, stoutly, "I hold to my old opinion, and I confess I prefer such a preacher as Dr. Wing to one like Mr. Myrtle. But, under existing circumstances, I shall go with you."

He was thinking about the splendid match Mr. Bennett had hinted at.

"I am glad to hear you say so," said Mr. Bennett; "it will bring us more frequently together. You have a bril-

liant future, if you will listen to me; but it won't do to make another blunder, such as you have just committed."

"I suppose you will tell me now about that young lady?" asked Hiram, with an interest which he could not conceal.

"Not one word, not one syllable," replied the other, good-humoredly, "until you are actually within the pale. Don't be alarmed," he continued, seeing Hiram look disappointed. "To tell you would not do the least good, and might frustrate my plans. But I will work the matter for you, my boy, if it is a possible thing; and, for my part, I see no difficulty in it. When my family come in town, we will organize. Meantime, let me ask, have you learned to waltz?"

"To waltz!" exclaimed Hiram, in horror. "No! I don't even know how to dance; I was taught to believe it sinful. As to waltzing, how can you ask me if I practise such a disgusting, such an immoral style of performance, invented by infidel German students to give additional zest to their orgies?"

"Did Dr. Chellis tell you that?" said Mr. Bennett, with something like a sneer.

"No; I read it in the *Christian Herald*."

"I thought so. Dr. Chellis has too much sense to utter such stuff."

"Does Mr. Myrtle approve of waltzing?" inquired Hiram, with a groan.

"Hiram, don't be a goose! Of course, Mr. Myrtle does not exactly *approve* of it. That is, he don't waltz himself, his wife don't waltz, and his children are not old enough;

but he does not object to any 'rational amusement,' and he leaves his congregation to decide what *is* rational."

"Well, I shall not waltz, that's certain."

"Yes you will, too. The girl you are to marry—the girl who has a clear two hundred thousand in her own right—*she* waltzes, and *you* have got to waltz."

Hiram's head swam, as if already giddy in the revolving maze; but it was the thought of the two hundred thousand dollars, nothing else, which turned his brain. The color in his face went and came; he hesitated.

"I will think of it," at last he ejaculated.

"Of course you will," cried Mr. Bennett—"of course you will, and decide like a sensible man afterward, not like an idiot; but you must decide quick, for I must put you in training for the fall campaign."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, simply this: the girl will not look at you unless you are a fashionable fellow—don't put on any more wry faces, but think of the prize—and I must have you well up in all the accomplishments. For the rest, you are what I call a finely-formed, good-looking, and rather graceful fellow, if you are my cousin."

Hiram's features relaxed.

"When can I call on Mr. Myrtle?" he asked.

"Not for several weeks. He is taking a longer vacation than usual. However, come with me every Sunday, and you will hear Mr. Strang, our curate, who officiates in Mr. Myrtle's absence. A most excellent man, and a very fair preacher."

"Have you a Sunday-school connected with the church?"

"Do you think we are heathen, Hiram? 'Have we a Sunday-school?' I should suppose so! What is more, the future Mrs. Meeker is one of the teachers."

"Yet she waltzes?"

"Yet she waltzes."

"Well, I hope I shall understand this better by-and-by."

"Certainly you will."

The two proceeded down-town to their business.

A few days after, Hiram Meeker was the pupil—the private pupil—of Signor Alberto, dancing-master to *the* aristocracy of the town.

[That is not what he called himself, but I wish to be intelligible.]

Alberto had directions to perfect his pupil in every step practised in the world of fashion. Hiram proved an apt and ready scholar. He gave to this new branch of education the same care and assiduity that he always practised in every thing he undertook. Mr. Bennett was not out of the way in praising his parts. Signor Alberto was delighted with his pupil. His rapid progress was a source of great pleasure to him. To be sure, he could not get on quite as well as if he had consented to go in with a class; but this Hiram would not think of. Still, the matter was managed without much difficulty, as the Signor could always command supernumeraries.

When it came to the waltz, Alberto was kind enough to introduce to Hiram a young lady—a friend of his—who, he said, was perfectly familiar with every measure; and who would, as a particular favor, take the steps with him, under

the master's special direction. It took Hiram's breath away, poor fellow, to be thrown so closely into the embraces of such a fine-looking and by no means diffident damsel. It was what he had not been accustomed to. True, *he* had been in the habit of playing the flirt, of holding the girls' hands in his, and pressing them significantly, and sighing, and talking sentimental nonsense; but here the tables were turned. Hiram was the bashful one, and the young lady apparently the flirt. She explained, with tantalizing *nonchalance*, how he ought to take a more encircling hold of her waist. She illustrated *practically* the different methods—close waltzing, medium waltzing, and waltzing at arms' length. She would waltz light and heavy—observing to Hiram that he might on some occasion have an awkward partner, and it was well to be prepared. To better explain, the young lady would become the gentleman; and, in whirling Hiram round, she exhibited a strength and vigor truly astonishing. All the while, Hiram, with quick breath, and heightened color, and whirling brain, was striving hard and failing fast to keep his wits about him. What was most annoying of all, the young lady, though so accommodating and familiar as a partner to practise with under the master's eye, when the exercise was over appeared perfectly and absolutely indifferent to Hiram. She was quite insensible to every little by-play of his to attract her notice, which, as he advanced in her acquaintance, he began to practise before the lesson commenced, or after it was finished. The fact is, whoever or whatever she might be, she evidently held Hiram in great contempt as a green-horn. Strange to say, for once all his powers of fascination



failed ; and the more he tried to call them forth, the more signal was his discomfiture.

It does not appear that Hiram, after finishing his education with Signor Alberto, attempted to continue his acquaintance with his partner in the waltz. Once during the course he did ask the young lady where she lived, and intimated that he would be pleased to call and see her ; but the observation was received with such evident signs of dissatisfaction, that he never renewed the subject, and it is doubtful if he ever explained to himself satisfactorily his failure to get in the good graces of such a handsome girl and so perfect a waltzer.

## CHAPTER XIII.

THE Rev. Augustus Myrtle, rector of St. Jude's, was one of those circumstances of Nature which are only to be encountered in metropolitan life.

This seems a paradox. I will explain. His qualities were born with him, not acquired; and those qualities could only shine in the aristocratic and fashionable circles of a large city. As animals by instinct avoid whatever is noxious and hurtful, so Augustus Myrtle from his infancy, by instinct, avoided all poor people and all persons not in the "very first society."

Children are naturally democrats; school is a great leveller. Augustus Myrtle recognized no such propositions. While a boy at the academy, while a youth in college, he sought the intimacy of boys and youths of rich persons of *ton*. It was not enough that a young fellow was well bred and had a good social position—he must be rich. It was not enough that he was rich—he must have position.

I do not think that Augustus Myrtle sat down carefully to calculate all this. So I say it was instinctive—born with him. A person who frequents only the society of the well bred and the wealthy must, to a degree at least, possess refined and elegant and expensive tastes, and it was so in the case of Myrtle. His tastes were refined and elegant and expensive.

His parents were themselves people of respectability, but very poor. His mother used to say that her son's decided predilections were in consequence of her unfortunate state of mind the season Augustus was born, when poverty pinched the family sharply. Mr. Myrtle was a man of collegiate education, with an excellent mind, but totally unfitted for active life. The result was, after marrying a poor girl—who was, however, of the “aristocracy”—that he became, through the influence of her friends, the librarian of the principal library in a neighboring city, with a fair salary, on which, with occasional sums received for literary productions, he managed to bring up and support his small family. At times, when some unexpected expenses had to be incurred, as I have hinted, poverty seemed to poor Mrs. Myrtle a very great hardship, and such was their situation the year Augustus was born.

He was the only son, and the hope of the parents centred on him. It was settled that he should be sent to the best schools and to a first-class college. He had rather more than ordinary ability, the power to display to the best advantage the talents and acquirements he did possess, together with attractive manners, which, though reserved, were pleasing. He was slight, gracefully formed, and a little above the ordinary height. He had a dark complexion, a face thin and colorless, with fine, large black eyes.

When I say Augustus Myrtle sought only the intimacy of the rich and well bred, you must not suppose he was a toady, or practised obsequiously. Not at all. He mingled with his associates, assuming to be one of them—their equal. True, his want of money led to desperate economi-

cal contrivances behind the scenes, but on the stage he betrayed by no sign that affairs did not flow as smoothly with him as with his companions.

In all this, he had in his mother great support and encouragement. Her relations were precisely of the stamp Augustus desired to cultivate, and this gave him many advantages. As usually happens, he found what he sought. By the aid of the associations he had formed with so much assiduity, to say nothing of his own personal recommendations, he married a nice girl, the only child of a widowed lady in the right "set," and with sixty thousand dollars, besides a considerable expectancy on the mother's decease. Shortly after, he became rector of St. Jude's, the most exclusive "aristocratic" religious establishment in New York.

At this present period, the Rev. Augustus Myrtle was but thirty-five, and, from his standing and influence, he considered it no presumption to look forward to the time when he should become bishop of the diocese.

His health was excellent, if we may except some *very* slight indications of weakness of the larynx, which had been the cause of his making two excursions to Europe, each of six months' duration, which were coupled with an appropriation of twenty-five hundred dollars by his indulgent congregation to pay expenses.

While Mr. Myrtle and his family were still absent, Hiram had made very sensible progress in mastering the mysteries of the Episcopal form of worship, and became fully versed in certain doctrinal points, embracing all questions of what constitutes a "church" and a "proper succession." His in-

vestigations were carried on under the direction of the Rev. Mr. Strang, a man of feeble mind (Mr. Myrtle was careful to have no one near him unless the contrast was to his advantage), but a worthy and conscientious person, who believed he was doing Heaven service in bringing Hiram into the fold of the true church.

Hiram was once more in his element as an object of religious interest. Before the rector had returned, he became very impatient to see him. It was a long while since he had been at communion, and he began to fear that his hold on heaven would be weakened by so long an absence from that sacrament. Besides, he felt quite prepared and ready to be confirmed.

The Myrtles returned at last. In due time, Mrs. Bennett talked the whole matter over with Mrs. Myrtle. Hiram was represented as "a very rich young merchant, destined to be a leading man in the city—of an ancient and honorable New England family—very desirable in the church—a cousin"—[here several sentences were uttered in a whisper, accompanied by nods and signs significant, which I shall never be able to translate]—"must secure him—ripe for it now."

I think I forgot to say that Mrs. Myrtle and Mrs. Bennett were in the same "set" as young ladies, and were very intimate.

The next day Mrs. Bennett opened the subject to Mr. Myrtle, his wife having duly prepared him. The object was to introduce Hiram into the church in the most effective manner. This could only be done through the instrumentality of the reverend gentleman himself.

Every thing went smoothly. Mr. Myrtle was not insensible to the value of infusing new and fresh elements into his congregation.

"Of course," he observed, "this wealthy young man will take an entire pew."

[The annual auction of rented pews was soon to come off, and Mr. Myrtle liked marvellously to see strong competition. It spoke well for his popularity.]

"He will *purchase* a pew, if a desirable one can be had," answered Mrs. Bennett.

"Indeed! How fortunate! The Winslows are going to Europe to reside, and I think will sell theirs. One of the best in the church. Pray ask Mr. Bennett to look after it."

"Thank you. How very considerate, how very thoughtful! We will see to it at once."

The interview ended, after some further conversation, in a manner most satisfactory.

. . . . .  
It was a magnificent autumnal afternoon, the second week of October, when Hiram Meeker, by previous appointment, called at the residence of the Rev. Augustus Myrtle. The house was built on to the church, so as to correspond in architecture, and exhibited great taste in exterior as well as interior arrangement.

Hiram walked up the steps and boldly rang the bell. He had improved a good deal in some respects since his passage-at-arms with Dr. Chellis, and while under the auspices of Mr. Bennett. He had laid aside the creamy air he used so frequently to assume, and had hardened himself, so to speak, against contingencies.

As I was saying, he marched boldly up and rang the bell. A footman in unexceptionable livery opened the door. Mr. Myrtle was engaged; but on Hiram's sending in his name, he was ushered into the front parlor and requested to sit, and informed that Mr. Myrtle would see him in a few minutes. This gave Hiram time to look about him.

It so happened that it was the occasion of a preliminary gathering for the season (there had been no meeting since June) of those who belonged to the "Society for the Relief of Reduced Ladies of former Wealth and Refinement." This "relief" consisted in furnishing work to the recipients of the *bounty* at prices about one-quarter less than they could procure elsewhere, and without experiencing a sense of obligation which these charitable ladies managed invariably to call forth.

There was already in the back parlor a bevy of six or eight, principally young, fine-looking, and admirably-dressed women.

Arrayed in the most expensive silks of rich colors admirably corresponding with the season, and fitted in a mode the most faultless to the exquisite forms of these fair creatures, or made dexterously to conceal any natural defect, they rose, they sat, they walked up and down the room, greeting from time to time the new-comers as they arrived.

The conversation turned meanwhile on the way in which the summer had been spent; and much delicate gossip was broached or hinted at, but not entered into. Next the talk was about dress. The names of the several fashionable dressmakers were quoted as authority for this, and denunciatory of that. Congratulations were exchanged: "How

charmingly you look!"—"How sweet that is!"—"What a lovely bonnet!"

All this Hiram Meeker drank in with open ears and eyes; for, from where he was sitting, he could see every thing that was going on, as well as hear every word.

One thing particularly impressed him. He felt that never before had he been in such society. The ladies of Dr. Chellis's church were intelligent, refined, and well bred; but here was *TON*—that unmistakable, unquestionable *ton* which arrogates every thing unto itself, claims every thing, and with a certain class *is* every thing.

I need not say, to a person of Hiram's keen and appreciative sense, the picture before him was most attractive. How perfect was every point in it! What minute and fastidious attention had been devoted to every article of dress! How every article had been specially *designed* to set off and adorn! The hat, how charming; the hair, how exquisitely coiffed; the shawl, how magnificent; the dress, how rich! The gloves, of what admirable tint, and how neatly fitted; and how wonderfully were the walking-boots adapted to display foot and ankle! And these did not distinguish one, but *every one* present.

I do not wonder Hiram was carried away by the spectacle. There is something very overpowering in such a scene. Who is sufficient to resist its seductive influences?

In the midst of what might be called a trance, when Hiram's senses were rapt in a sort of charmed Elysium, the Rev. Augustus Myrtle entered the room. He did not look toward Hiram, but passed directly into the back parlor. He walked along, not as if he were stepping on eggs, but



very smoothly and noiselessly, as if treading (as he really was) on the finest of velvet carpets.

Instantly what a flutter! How they ran up to him, ambitious to get the first salute, and to proffer the first congratulation! How gracefully the Rev. Augustus Myrtle received each! Two or three there were (there were reasons, doubtless) whose cheeks he kissed decorously, yet possibly with some degree of relish. The rest had to content themselves with shaking hands. Many and various were the compliments he received. Their "delight to see him! how well he was looking!" and so forth.

Presently he started to leave them.

"Oh, you must not run off so soon! we shall follow you to your *sanctum*."

"An engagement," replied Mr. Myrtle, glancing into the other room.

A score of handsome eyes were turned in the direction where Hiram was seated, listening with attention, and watching every thing.

Discomfited by such an array, he colored, coughed, and nervously shifted his position. Some laughed. The rest looked politely indifferent.

"A connection of the Bennetts," whispered Mrs. Myrtle; "a fine young man—immensely rich. He is to come, in future, to our church."

"Ah!"—"Yes!"—"Indeed!"—"Excellent!" Such were the responses.

Meanwhile Mr. Myrtle had greeted Hiram courteously, and invited him to his library. This was across the hall in a room which formed a part of the church edifice.

As Hiram followed Mr. Myrtle out of the parlor, several of the ladies took another look at him. They could not but remark that he was finely formed, fashionably dressed, and, thanks to Signor Alberto, of a very graceful carriage.

The interview between Mr. Myrtle and Hiram was brief. The latter, thoroughly tutored by his cousin, was careful to say nothing about his previous conviction and wonderful conversion, but left Mr. Myrtle, as was very proper, to lead in the conversation. He had previously talked with Mr. Strang, which, with the recommendation of Mrs. Bennett, left no doubt in his mind as to Hiram's fitness to receive confirmation.

It was very hard for him to be informed that his early baptism must go for nothing—what time his father and mother, in their ignorance and simplicity, brought their child to present before God, and receive the beautiful rite of the sprinkling of water.

A dreadful mistake they made, since no properly consecrated hands administered on that occasion. But, nevertheless, Hiram is safe. Lucky fellow! he has discovered the mistake, and repaired it in season.

"I think, Mr. Meeker, your conversations with Mr. Strang have proved very instructive to you. Here is a work I have written, which embraces the whole of my controversy with Mr. Howland on the true Church (and there is no salvation in any other) and the apostolic succession. Having read and approved this," he added, with a pleasant smile, "I will vouch for you as a good Churchman."

Hiram was delighted. He took the volume, and was

about to express his thanks, when Mrs. Myrtle appeared at the door, which had been left open.

"My dear, I regret to disturb you, but—"

"I will join you at once," said Mr. Myrtle, rising. "This is Mr. Meeker, a cousin of your friend Mrs. Bennett"—as if she did not know it.

Mrs. Myrtle bowed graciously, and said, with charming condescension:

"Then it is *you* I have heard such a good report of! You are coming to our church, away from—"

"Never mind from where, my dear," said Mr. Myrtle, pleasantly, and he bowed Hiram out in a manner which positively charmed our hero.

That evening Mr. Bennett told Hiram he had purchased a pew for him—price sixteen hundred and fifty dollars.

"Sixteen hundred and fifty dollars!" exclaimed the other, in amazement.

"Yes."

"Why, I can't stand that. The dearest pews in Dr. Chellis's church were not over six hundred. You are joking."

"You are an idiot," retorted Mr. Bennett, half pettishly, half playfully. "Have you not placed yourself in my hands? Shall I not manage your interests as I please? I say I want sixteen hundred and fifty dollars. I know you can draw the money without the least inconvenience. If I thought you could not, I would advance it myself. Are you content?"

Hiram nodded a doubtful assent.

"How fortunate," continued Mr. Bennett, "that the Winslows are going to Europe—and how lucky I got there the

minute I did! Young Bishop came in just as I closed the purchase. I know what *he* wanted it for, and I know what *I* wanted it for. Hiram, a word in your ear—your pew is immediately in front of our heiress! Bravo, old fellow! Now, will you pay up?"

Hiram nodded this time with satisfaction.

The second Sunday thereafter one might observe that the Winslows' pew had been newly cushioned and carpeted, and otherwise put in order. Several Prayer-Books and a Bible, elegantly bound, and lettered "H. MEEKER," were placed in it. This could not escape the notice of the very elegant and fashionably-dressed young lady in the next slip. Strange to say, the pew contained no occupant. But just before the service was about to commence, Hiram, purposely a little late, walked quietly in, and took possession of his property. His *pose* was capital. His ease and *nonchalance* were perfectly unexceptionable, evidencing *haut ton*. He had been practising for weeks.

"Who can he be?" asked the elegant and fashionably-dressed young lady of herself.

She was left to wonder.

When he walked homeward, Hiram was informed by Mr. Bennett that the elegant and fashionably-dressed young lady was Miss Arabella Thorne, without father, without mother, of age, and possessed of a clear sum of two hundred thousand dollars in her own right!

## CHAPTER XIV.

MISS ARABELLA THORNE was the daughter of an old citizen of New York, a worthy man, a plumber by trade, who, by means of plenty of work, small competition, and high prices, managed to scrape together fifty or sixty thousand dollars, which from time to time he judiciously invested in real estate.

Late in life he married a tall, lean, sour-visaged spinster, considerably past thirty, with nothing whatever to recommend her except that she belonged to one of the first families.

The fact is, she was a poor relation, and had all her life been passed around from cousin to cousin, each endeavoring to shift the burden as quick as possible. As she grew older she became more fretful and ill-tempered, until it was a serious question with all interested how to dispose of her. Of late years she had taken to novel-reading; and, when engaged with a favorite romance, she was so peevish and irritable, that, to use a common expression, there was no living with her.

Things were at this pass when Thorn (he spelled his name without an e) was called to do some work at the house of Mr. De Silver, an uncle of the "poor relation," with whom she was then staying.

This gentleman, who for years had been at his wits' end to know what to do with his niece, conceived the design of marrying her to Thorn, who was in good circumstances, and could give her a comfortable home. It so happened that she was at that time absorbed with a novel (she always fancied herself the heroine) where the principal character was called on to make a sacrifice, and by so doing married a nobleman in disguise. She, therefore, was ready; but it was not without some difficulty that Thorn was brought into the arrangement. However, the distinction of marrying so much above him, and the advantage which might avail to his children, overcame his natural good sense, and the "poor relation" became Mrs. Thorn.

It is very certain that Mrs. Thorn would have been the death of her husband in a reasonably short period, had she not herself been suddenly cut off the second year of her married life, leaving an infant a few hours old, whom she named Arabella, after her last heroine, just as the breath was leaving her body.

Mr. Thorn buried his wife, and was comforted. He never married again. His eighteen months' experience was sufficient. He even consented to give up the direction of the infant—who would *not* be a poor relation like her mother—to Mrs. De Silver, who proceeded to look after it quite as she would one of her own children.

[And this was all because old Thorn was getting rich, and would probably not marry again, and Arabella would have his money.]

When Arabella was ten years old, her father died. By his will he made Mr. De Silver his executor, but prudently

forbade any sale of his real estate till his daughter should be twenty-one, when she was to enter into possession. The personal property was ample for her meantime.

Arabella grew up quite as the adopted child of the De Silvers. They had no daughter, but were blest with three sons. The youngest was but ten years older than Arabella, for whom Mrs. De Silver had destined him.

Miss Thorne (to whose name an *e* had been mysteriously added) bore a strong resemblance to her deceased mother; but there was one striking, I may say overwhelming difference between them. Mrs. Thorne had all her life been poor and dependent, and treated as such while thrown about from house to house for a precarious home. She was crossed and snubbed, and a naturally unamiable temper made a thousand times worse by the treatment she received. Arabella was rich and independent, and spoiled by over-indulgence to her idle whims and caprices. For Mrs. De Silver, intent on making the match, did not dare cross her dear Arabella in the least thing. She was shrewd, and soon perceived that she controlled the situation, and did not hesitate to take advantage of it. In fact, she kept everybody dancing attendance on her. Fond of admiration to an absurd degree, she still had a constant suspicion that she was courted for her money.

As I have said, in person she resembled her mother, but here wealth came in to do away with the resemblance. True, she was tall and angular, but she was made up superbly, so that on looking at her one would exclaim—"What a stylish woman!" True, her features were homely, and her complexion without freshness, but over these were

spread the atmosphere of fashion and assured position. She had a consciousness which repelled any idea that *she* could be otherwise than handsome, fascinating, intelligent, and every thing else desirable; and this consciousness actually produced, in a large majority, the pleasing illusion that she was really all these. But she was not. On the contrary, stripped of the gloss, she was censorious, supercilious, and selfish. Deprived of her dressmaker, she was gaunt and unsightly. Separated from her position, she would have been unbearable.

Arabella had many offers, of course, but she was too fond of her power and too suspicious of an attempt on her purse to yield easily. She was enough of a coquette not absolutely to destroy the hopes of an admirer, but managed to keep him dangling in her train. She had never absolutely discouraged young De Silver, but she would not commit herself even to Mrs. De Silver, who still fondly hoped that the money of the industrious plumber would come into her family.

So matters ran on till Miss Thorne was of age. Mr. De Silver evidently did not suppose that there was to be any change in the management of his ward's affairs. He was soon undeceived. The young lady, about two weeks after the event, asked for a private interview with her guardian, and very quietly, after a series of polite phrases, announced that from that time she should herself take charge of her own property. There was nothing in this to which Mr. De Silver could object. Beyond some advantages which he derived from its management, without injury to his ward, it was of no importance; but he was not a little mortified



nevertheless. It looked as if there was a lack of confidence in his management; but he could only assent, and say that his accounts were ready for her inspection.

The truth is, Arabella had made some acquaintances who ranked a grade higher in the fashionable world even than the De Silvers. They had impressed her with an idea that it would add to her importance to have her own "solicitor," and take on herself the management of her affairs.

To this end she had consulted Mr. Farrar, a well-known and experienced lawyer, who had been recommended to her by one of her friends. Just then speculation in real estate was rife, and prices had reached an extravagant point. The first thing which Miss Thorne did, under the advice of Mr. Farrar, was to sell from time to time, as opportunity offered, all the real estate which her father had left her, and invest it in personal securities. In this way a very large sum was realized, and Miss Thorne's labors soon reduced to the simple task of receiving her semi-annual dividends.

Mr. Bennett had not overrated the value of her property when he pronounced her worth two hundred thousand dollars. On the contrary, it is probable one might add fifty thousand to the computation and be nearer the mark.

When Mrs. De Silver saw the independent course Miss Thorne was pursuing, she became still more assiduous in her efforts to please her dear Arabella. The latter, since it was still convenient to live with the De Silvers, was sufficiently amiable; but she never omitted an opportunity to show that she was her own mistress, and intended to continue so.

The De Silvers were Episcopalians, but they did not

attend the most fashionable church. Miss Thorne very soon purchased an expensive pew in St. Jude's; and although Mrs. De Silver kept a carriage which was always at Miss Thorne's disposal, the latter set up a handsome brougham of her own.

The young lady, after joining her new church, had determined to distinguish herself. She was not content with moderate performances. She aspired to lead. She kept at the very height of fashion. Yet St. Jude's had no more zealous member. She was an inveterate party-goer, and nothing pleased her better than to have double engagements through the whole season; but the period of Lent found her utterly *dévoté*—a most zealous attendant on all the ordinances of the Church. She was very intimate with Mr. Myrtle, and it is probable that no one had half so much influence with her as the Rev. Augustus Myrtle himself. She had her *protégés* also—generally some handsome young fellow about taking orders, whose devotion to Miss Thorne was perfectly execrating.

Time went on, and Miss Arabella Thorne was carried along in the train of the tyrant. With the passing years she became more intensely fashionable, more bigoted, more fond of admiration, more difficult to please. She had refused so many offers, while she had coquetted so much, that young men began to avoid her. This greatly increased her natural irritability; made her jealous of the success of every rising belle, censorious, ill-natured in remark, and generally disagreeable.

When Hiram Meeker first saw Miss Arabella Thorne in her pew at St. Jude's, the interesting young woman was

(dare I mention it?) already twenty-eight. In respect to appearance, she had altered very little since she was eighteen. So much depended on her milliner, her dressmaker, her costumer, and her maid, and, to their credit be it spoken, they performed their duty so well, that the "ravages" of the fashionable seasons she had passed through were not at all visible.

There were times when Miss Arabella Thorne would confess to herself that she ought to marry. But, with every succeeding birthday, came increased suspicion that she was sought only for her fortune.

Such was the position of affairs when the shrewd wholesale dry-goods merchant, satisfied that all his cousin cared for in matrimony was money, conceived the idea of making a match between Hiram and the fashionable Arabella.

It did not take the former long, after Mr. Bennett once explained just how things stood, to comprehend exactly the situation, and to form and mature his plans accordingly. He had committed a blunder, as Mr. Bennett termed it, in giving up Miss Tenant; but that was a conventional mistake, if—which it is very doubtful—Hiram ever admitted that it was a mistake. Here, however, he could bring his keen knowledge of human nature to play; and, once understanding the character of Miss Thorne, he felt fully equal to the enterprise. In fact, Hiram was once more on his old ground, and he enjoyed the idea of the contest he was about to engage in.

Mr. Myrtle was fully enlisted on Hiram's side. He was much pleased with the addition of a wealthy, rising young man—and a proselyte besides—to his church. He feared

that Miss Thorne might in time be lost to it by her marrying outside of his congregation. Here was a capital chance to secure *her*, and add to his own influence and popularity.

He was too astute to approach the subject directly. Miss Thorne might be suspicious even of him. He would give her no opportunity. Mr. Myrtle was too polished and too refined a man, too dignified indeed, to even *appear* in the light of a match-maker. But assurance was conveyed by Mrs. Myrtle to Mrs. Bennett, and thence *via* Mr. Bennett confidentially to Hiram, that Mr. Myrtle might be relied on to do every thing in his power in the delicate business.

Thus fortified, and conscious of the aid of the Bennett family, which was a very strong point, our hero entered on the fall and winter campaign, resolved before it was over to secure the two hundred thousand dollars of the fashionable Arabella, and, as it must needs be, that inestimable person along with them.

I have mentioned their first sight of each other in church, and the curiosity of Miss Thorne to know who the young man in the next pew could be. And here Hiram's generalship must be specially noticed. Mrs. Bennett proposed to bring about an immediate introduction by arranging an *accidental* meeting at her house. This Hiram peremptorily objected to; and in speaking on the subject with Mr. Bennett, with whom all his conversations were held, he displayed such a subtle insight into the character, habits, and peculiarities of Miss Thorne, that Mr. Bennett was amazed. He afterward told his wife that she must let Hiram have *his* own way, as the fellow knew more than all of them.

Two parties were to come off the following week, to both of which Hiram was invited, through the influence of the Bennetts.

Miss Thorne was, of course, present. Hiram, now perfectly at his ease, and fashionably attired, made no insignificant display. He was introduced to a great many young ladies, and, selecting two or three of the most attractive, he paid at different stages of the evening assiduous court to them. His waltzing was really superb [O Hiram, what a change!], and not a few inquired, "Who is he?"

Mrs. Bennett was really proud to answer: "A cousin of ours. A very fine young man, indeed—very rich."

Miss Thorne did not ask any questions—not she; but she quickly recognized in the waltzer the occupant of the pew who had already attracted her notice. She waited complacently for the moment when Hiram should be led up to her for presentation, and she had already decided just how she should receive him. She was resolved to ruffle his complacency, and thus punish him for not paying his first tribute to her charms; then, so she settled it, she would relax, and permit him to waltz with her.

When the evening passed, and the fashionable young man had made no demonstration, she was amazed. Such a thing had never happened before. To think that he should not ask *her*, while he devoted half the evening to Miss Innis, who waltzed shockingly (every one knew that), and who had no money either!

She went home in a very uncomfortable state of mind.

The following Wednesday there was a repetition of this very scene. The party was even more brilliant than the

last, Miss Thorne more exquisitely dressed, but Hiram kept aloof.

Miss Thorne had never been slighted before—never. This evening she was tempted to waive her pride, and inquire of her dear friend Mrs. Bennett, with whom she saw Hiram conversing; but the thought was too humiliating, and she forbore.

How she hated the wretch!—that is, as women hate, and as men like to be hated. What should she do? Could she endure to attend another party, and be so treated? Why, the creature never even looked toward her! What right had he to dress so fashionably and to waltz with such ease, and in fact appear so well every way?

To occupy, quite by himself, the very best pew in St. Jude's, directly in front of her! What audacity! Then his provoking *nonchalance*. Oh, what was she to do? She should go crazy!

Not quite that. She would first inquire of Mr. Myrtle, in a very careless manner. So she ran in, that same morning, on the accomplished clergyman, and was speedily in a full gallop of conversation.

"By-the-way," she exclaimed, at length, as if a new thought had suddenly struck her, "pray, tell me, who is my new neighbor? I intended asking the last time I saw you, but forgot it."

The Rev. Augustus Myrtle looked completely mystified, and asked with his eyes, plainly as eyes could ask, "Pray, what do you mean?"

"I see you don't take. I mean the new occupant of the Winslows' pew; some relation, I suppose."

"Oh, no. He is a cousin of the Bennetts, a young merchant, who has purchased the pew."

"Indeed? A good Churchman, I hope, if he is to sit so near me."

"I should judge so. I am but slightly acquainted with him. Mrs. Bennett, however, speaks of him in the most enthusiastic terms. She says he has but one fault (I mention it to save you young people from disappointment), which is, that he is not fond of ladies' society."

"I know better," interrupted Miss Thorne, betraying herself; for she was thinking of what she had witnessed at the two parties. Too much a woman of the world to blush, or exhibit any embarrassment, she as quickly recovered, and added, laughingly, "No one can make me believe he takes all that pains with his dress for nothing."

"Now I think of it, he does dress in very good taste," said Mr. Myrtle, carelessly. "I think, however, what Mrs. Bennett meant to convey is, that Mr. Meeker is not a marrying man. She says he is very rich, and has a horror of being caught, as it is called."

"So, then, his name is Meeker," replied Miss Thorne, with an absent air, as if she had paid no attention to Mr. Myrtle's concluding observation, though she had drunk in every word with eager interest.

"Yes. You will probably meet him at the Bennetts; though I do not think he would please you, Miss Arabella. [Mr. Myrtle knew the weakness of spinsters, after reaching a certain age, for being called by their first name.] You are too *exigeante*, my dear young lady, and Mr. Meeker is devoted to affairs."

"I wonder Mrs. Myrtle does not return; she told me she would not be gone two minutes," said Miss Thorne, with the air of complete indifference to what Mr. Myrtle was saying, which a fashionable thorough-bred knows so well how to assume.

"Here she is," said Mr. Myrtle. "I will leave you together, and go back to my labors. Good-morning."

Miss Thorne by this time was really very much excited; so much so, that she could not resist speaking of Hiram to Mrs. Myrtle, though of course in the same accidental way in which she had inquired of her husband.

Mrs. Myrtle, of course, had much more to say in reply. All about Hiram's joining their church—what a good young man he was, how conscientious, how devoted to business, and how rich, and getting richer every day.

Miss Thorne drew herself up slightly, as if that could be of no consequence to *her*. Still, she unbent directly, and said, with an amiable smile, as if simply to continue the conversation, "But Mr. Myrtle says he is a woman-hater."

"Oh, I think not so bad as that; but Mrs. Bennett says the ladies are all crazy about him, and he has a ridiculous suspicion that they are after his money."

"The wretch!" exclaimed Miss Arabella, laughing.

"So I say," rejoined Mrs. Myrtle. "But the fact is, Mrs. Bennett says that Mr. Meeker thinks too much about business, and if he goes on in this way he will never get married, and she tells him she is determined that he shall marry."

"A very proper resolve!" exclaimed Miss Thorne, in the same vein.



The conversation now turned on other topics, and, after a few minutes, Miss Thorne took leave, in no very enviable state of mind.

Here was a young man about to become one of the stars of fashion—rich, accomplished—quite in her own set, too; yet not a step had he taken toward securing her favor. Why, he might even outstrip her at St. Jude's! Then what *would* become of her? "I wonder if he keeps Lent?" she muttered between her clinched teeth, as she walked along.

At that very moment, who should she encounter but Miss Innis, a charming, bewitching, and very fashionable young creature (so all the gentlemen said), to whom, at the late parties, as I have already mentioned, Hiram had been devoted the larger part of the evening.

The ladies rushed toward each other, and embraced in the most affectionate manner. The usual rapid chit-chat ensued.

"What do you think of our new beau?" asked Miss Innis.

Now Miss Thorne was burning with envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness toward the young and rising belle, which was greatly increased by witnessing Hiram's extraordinary devotion to her. After the conversation with Mrs. Myrtle, she could no longer doubt the fact that he was soon to become of decided importance in the fashionable world. The moment she saw Miss Innis approaching, she anticipated some such question as was now put to her; and, knowing that through her dear friend Mrs. Bennett she could make Hiram's acquaintance at any time, she had decided how to treat it.

She replied, therefore, with considerable animation, and as if she knew at once to whom Miss Innis alluded: "Oh, I think we shall make something of him before the season is over. I tell Mrs. Bennett she must cure him of some little provincialisms, however."

"Provincialisms!" exclaimed Miss Innis, who prided herself on her family and aristocratic breeding, though she had not wealth to boast of—"provincialisms! I confess I discovered none, and I certainly had a pretty good opportunity for judging. He waltzes divinely, doesn't he?"

The tantalizing minx knew very well that Miss Thorne could only judge by observation.

"He waltzes with much perfection, certainly," replied Miss Thorne, with the air of a connoisseur, "but I think a little stiffly."

"Quite the reverse, I assure you. I never had a partner with whom it was so easy to waltz. He supports one so perfectly! I declare I am in love with him already. Arabella dear, I give you warning that I shall try my best to engross his attention the entire season."

She laughed as she said this, and Miss Thorne laughed; then these young women of fashion again embraced, and with smiles and amiable expressions went their way.

How suddenly the countenance of each then changed! That of Miss Innis gave unmistakable tokens of contempt and disgust, while Miss Thorne's face expressed a concentrated venom, which, if I had not myself often witnessed, I would not believe is in the power of woman to display.

The rencontre with Miss Innis was so unendurable, that Miss Thorne resolved to proceed at once to Mrs. Bennett's,

where she could get definite information. Her pride was beginning to give way before her jealousy of a rival.

Mrs. Bennett was at home, and welcomed her dear "Arabella" with more than usual cordiality. A long conversation ensued before Miss Thorne could bring herself to broach the delicate subject. At last—and it had to be *apropos* of nothing—she said:

"Oh, I declare I forgot!—Do you know that I am angry with you? Yes, very, very angry!"

Mrs. Bennett immediately put on the proper expression.

"Tell me, quick, all about it," she said. "I will do penance if I have given you cause."

"Indeed, you have given great cause. You have undertaken to bring out a gentleman, and your own cousin, too, without presenting him to me, and I made up my mind never to speak to you again; but you see how I keep my resolution."

"Poor Mr. Meeker!" exclaimed Mrs. Bennett. "He little thinks in what trouble he has involved me."

"But what have you to say for *yourself*?" persisted Miss Thorne.

"I declare, Arabella, I don't know what to say. Cousin Hiram is so odd and so obstinate on some points, although in most respects the best creature in the world."

"Why, what can you mean?"

"I can hardly explain what I do mean. In short, while Cousin Hiram asks my advice in many matters, and indeed follows it, yet where ladies are concerned he is as obstinate as a mule."

"But what has that to do with your not presenting him?"

"Well, since you must know," hesitated Mrs. Bennett, "he declined being introduced to you."

"Declined!"

"Yes."

"It is all through that hateful Mary Innis!" exclaimed Miss Thorne, reddening with rage. "I know it. I am sure of it. Yes, I see through it all—all!"

"I dare say," returned Mrs. Bennett. "I can't believe it either," she continued. "He is not so easily influenced. But, Arabella, my dear, think no more of the matter. You will like Mr. Mecker, I know, when you do meet, and all the more for any little obstacle at the beginning. I was just thinking how I could bring you together. What do you say to dropping in at—no, that won't do. I have it: come round this very evening and take tea with us. Mr. Mecker is almost sure to come in. He has not been here this week."

"Arabella" had her little objections.

"Nonsense, my darling! I am determined you two shall become acquainted before Mrs. Jones's party, and that is next Thursday. Don't forget how fond you are of waltzing, and there Cousin Hiram is superb."

"I know it," said Miss Thorne, with a sigh. "But won't it look strange?"

"Look strange to do what you have done so often, my darling! Now, Arabella, I won't take 'no' from you."

"I consent," said Miss Thorne, languidly. "He won't be rude to me, will he?"

"Rude! why, Arabella, what do you take him for?"

The ladies separated in great good humor.

Miss Thorne, with a view to be revenged on Miss Innis, was determined to secure our hero on any terms.

She was at Mrs. Bennett's at the appointed hour. On this occasion her toilet was elaborately simple. She always exhibited not only great taste, but great propriety, in dress. This evening one might readily suppose that, running in for a brief call, she had been induced to prolong her stay.

About eight o'clock, who should arrive but Hiram! What a singular coincidence!

An introduction followed.

Miss Thorne was very natural. She appeared entirely at ease, receiving Hiram with quiet cordiality, as if he were a member of the family.

Hiram, on his part, did not exhibit any of those disagreeable qualities for which he received credit, but was apparently quite disarmed by the domesticity of the scene.

The conversation became general, and all joined in it. After a while Mr. Bennett withdrew to "spend a half-hour at the club," assuring Miss Thorne that he would return in ample time to hand her to her carriage. Presently the servant called Mrs. Bennett, and hero and heroine were left alone together.

There was an awkward pause, which was first broken by Arabella, when the conversation ran on much in this way:

"We are to have a very gay season, I believe."

"Indeed!"

"I suppose you take a great interest in it?"

"Quite the contrary. I take very little."

"Still, you seem to enjoy parties."

"Why, yes. When I go, the best thing I can do is to enjoy them."

"But you like to go, don't you?"

"I can scarcely say I do—sometimes, perhaps."

"A person who waltzes as well as you do ought to like parties, I am sure."

"I feel very much flattered to have you praise my waltzing."

There was another pause. It was again broken by Miss Thorne.

"Do you know I think you so droll?"

"Me! pray, what is there droll about me?"

"Oh, I don't know. I can't tell. But you are droll—very droll."

"Really, I was not conscious of it."

"Were you aware that you occupy a seat directly in front of me in church?"

"Certainly; that's not droll, is it?"

"Well, yes; I think it is, rather. But that is not what I was going to say. Will you answer me one question truly? It will seem strange for me to ask it," simpered Arabella; "but you must know that your cousin Mrs. Bennett and I are the dearest friends—the *very* dearest friends; and meeting you here, it seems different, and I am not so much afraid of you."

Hiram sat with eyes wide open, in affected ignorance of what could possibly come next.

"Now you put me out, indeed you do; I can never say what I was going to, in the world."

"Do," said Hiram, gently.

"Well, will you tell me why you refused to be introduced to me, and who it is that has so prejudiced you against me?"

"No one, I assure you," replied Hiram.

"Then why did you decline the introduction? It is of no use to deny it; I know you *did* decline it."

"I heard you were an heiress," replied Hiram, naively, "and I don't like heiresses."

"Why not, pray?"

"Oh, for various reasons. They are always such vain, stuck-up creatures. Then they are excessively requiring, and generally disagreeable."

"You saucy thing, you!" exclaimed Miss Thorne, but by no means in a displeased tone.

"Then why did you ask me? I must tell the truth. I confess I did not want to make your acquaintance. Everybody was talking about Miss Thorne—Miss Thorne—Miss Thorne. For my part, it made me detest you."

"Oh, you horrible creature!" said Arabella, now quite appeased.

"I don't deny it," continued Hiram, pleasantly. "I repeat, I can't bear an heiress. I wouldn't marry one for the whole world."

"Why, pray?"

"Because she would want her separate purse and separate property; and it would be *her* house, and *her* horses and carriage, *her* coachman, and so on. Oh no—nothing of that for me. I will be master of my own establishment."

"What a savage you are! I declare it is as refreshing to hear you talk as it would be to visit a tribe of Indians."

"You are complimentary."

"You see I do you justice, though we are enemies. But tell me, now that you have been introduced to me, do I seem at all dangerous?"

Hiram Mecker's countenance changed from an expression of pleasant badinage to one of sentimental interest, while he gazed abstractedly in the young lady's face, without making any reply.

Arabella's heart beat violently, she scarce knew why.

"You do not answer," she said.

"I cannot tell," said Hiram, dreamily. Then starting, as if from a revery, he added, in his former tone: "Oh, your sex are all dangerous; only there are degrees."

"I see you are not disposed to commit yourself. I will not urge you. But do you think you will be afraid to waltz with me at the next party?"

"It was the introduction I objected to, not the waltz."

"Then you consent?"

"With your permission, gladly."

"The first waltz at the next party?"

"The first waltz at the next party."

It is not necessary to detail the conversation which ensued, and which was of a more general nature, referring to New York society, life *à la mode*, the reigning belles—then, by an easy transition, to Mr. Myrtle, and topics connected with St. Jude's. Soon they fell into quite a confidential tone, as church subjects of mutual interest were discussed, so that, when Mrs. Bennett returned to the room, it seemed almost like an interruption.

"I knew you two would like each other, if you ever



became acquainted," exclaimed Mrs. Bennett, with animation.

"Pray, how do you arrive at any such conclusion?" replied Miss Thorne, in a reserved tone, while she gave Hiram a glance which was intended to assure him that she was merely assuming it.

"Oh, never mind, my dear; it is not of so much consequence about your liking Hiram. You may detest him, if you please, but I am resolved that he shall like you; for you are my pet, you know."

Arabella looked affectionate, and Hiram laughed.

"Oh, you may laugh as much as you please! Men cannot understand our attachments for each other, can they, Arabella?"

"No, indeed."

"That is true enough," quoth Hiram.

After Mr. Bennett came in, a handsome little supper was served. That concluded, Hiram waited on Miss Thorne to her carriage.

"I shall expect you to take back all the naughty things you have said about me to your cousin," she said, very sweetly, after she was seated.

"About you, yes; but not about the *heiress*. But—but if you were not one, I do think I should like you pretty well. As it is, the objection is insuperable. Good-night."

Away went carriage and horses and Arabella Thorne. Hiram stepped back into the house.

"My wife says you have made a splendid hit to-night, Hiram," remarked Mr. Bennett.

"Does she?" replied the other, in an absent tone.

. . . . .

Hiram went late to Mrs. Jones's party.

So did Miss Thorne.

In a pleasant mood, Mrs. Bennett walked with her cousin to where the heiress was standing, and said, "Miss Thorne, this is Mr. Mecker. I believe, however, you have met before."

The waltzing had already commenced, and Hiram led his not unwilling partner to the floor, where they were soon giddily whirling, to the intense admiration of the lookers-on.

It was now that Hiram felt grateful to the unknown young lady who taught him how to waltz *close*. He practised it on this occasion to perfection.

Arabella, by degrees, leaned more and more heavily. One arm resting fondly on his shoulder, she was drawn into immediate contact with Hiram's *calculating* heart. Round and round she sped—round and round sped Hiram—until the two were so blended, that it was difficult to decide who or what were revolving.

At last, Arabella was forced to yield. Faintly she sighed, "I must stop;" and Hiram, coming to a graceful termination, seated her in triumph—the master of the situation!

Miss Innis looked on and smiled. Others expressed their admiration of the performance. None could deny that it was very perfect.

Soon they were on the floor again, and again Arabella struggled hard for the mastery. It was in vain. After repeated attempts to hold the field, she was obliged to yield.

Hiram was too familiar with the sex to attempt to pursue his advantage. Indeed, Miss Arabella, having accomplished her object in showing Miss Innis that she *could* monopolize Hiram if she chose, would have been quite ready to play the coquette, and assume the dignified.

Hiram was prepared for this, and further was resolved not to expose himself to any manifestation of her caprice. He perceived that Miss Thorne was disinclined to converse, and fancied she was preparing to be reserved. So he passed quietly into the next room, where he found Miss Innis quite ready to welcome him, though surrounded by a number of gentlemen. He claimed her for the next waltz, by virtue of an engagement entered into at Mrs. Brown's.

Soon the music commenced, and away they went, responsive to its fascinating strains. Both waltzed admirably. They entered with zest into the spirit of the scene, and with that sympathy of motion which makes every step so easy and so enjoyable. There was no rivalry, no holding out against the other. The pauses were natural—not by either, but, as it were, by mutual understanding.

Miss Thorne was also on the floor, with a very showy partner, doing her best to attract attention. She managed, as she swept by her rival, *accidentally* to step on her dress in a very damaging manner. But Miss Innis was one of those natural creatures who are never discomfited by such an occurrence. She very quietly withdrew, and in about two minutes was on the floor again.

"It is well," said Hiram to her, in a low tone, "that this happened to you instead of Miss Thorne."

"Why?"

"Because she never could have appeared again the same evening."

Miss Innis smiled, and spoke of something else. The little hit did not seem in the least to gratify her.

Hiram noted this. "Youth and beauty can well afford to be amiable, but it does not always happen that they are so," he whispered.

Miss Innis looked at him seriously, but made no reply; and the two took seats within the recess of a window.

At this moment, Miss Thorne, having stopped waltzing, passed across the room to the same vicinity, and stood talking with a gentleman, in a position to command a view of the couple just seated. As Hiram raised his eyes, he encountered hers, for she was looking intently toward him. He saw enough to be satisfied that his plans were working to perfection.

Without appearing to notice her presence, he continued the conversation with his partner; and so engrossing did it become on both sides, that neither seemed aware of the rapid flight of the hours. And it was only when Miss Innis perceived that the rooms were becoming thinned, that she started up with an exclamation of surprise that it was so late.

Hiram Meeker walked slowly homeward. He could not resist a certain influence from stealing over him.

"Why is it," he muttered to himself, "that all the handsome girls are without money, and all the rich ones are ugly?"

He drew a long sigh, as if it were hard for him to give up such a lovely creature. He soon reached his lodgings,

and, going to his room, he seated himself before the fire, which burned cheerfully in the grate, and remained for a time completely lost in thought.

O, Hiram Meeker! is it even now too late to obey some natural instincts? You are well embarked in affairs—have already made money enough to support a wife pleasantly. Your business is daily increasing; your mercantile position, for a young man, remarkably well assured. Here is a really lovely young girl—a little spoiled, it may be, by fashionable associations, but amiable, intelligent, and true-hearted. Probably you might win her, for she seems to like you. The connection would give you position, for you would marry into an old and most respectable family. True, you have conducted yourself shamefully toward Miss Tenant—to say nothing of Miss Burns. Let that pass. There is still opportunity to retrace. Attempt to win Miss Innis. If you do win her, what a happy home will be yours! As for Miss Thorne—Hiram, you *know* what she is. You despise her in your heart. Besides, she is almost twenty-nine—you but twenty-seven. Will her money compensate? Q Hiram, stop—stop now, and think!

This may have been the reverie of Hiram Meeker.

At last he rose and prepared to retire. Doubtless he had made a final and irrevocable decision.

What was it?

## CHAPTER XV.

THERE is good news for the Tenant family! The large commercial house in London whose failure dragged down Tenant & Co., had a branch at Rio. This branch had been heavily drawn on, and suspended because the firm in London stopped.

When affairs were investigated, it turned out that the Rio branch was well aboveboard. The result was, that the London house was enabled to pay a composition of fifteen and sixpence in the pound.

This not only enabled Tenant & Co. to settle with their creditors, but placed that old and respectable firm in a position to go on with their business, though in a manner somewhat limited when compared with their former operations.

The whole commercial community rejoiced at this. The house had been so long established, and was conducted with so much integrity, that to have it go down seemed a blow struck at the fair name and prosperity of the city.

A committee appointed by the creditors had investigated every thing connected with the failure, prior to hearing of the news from Rio. This committee utterly refused to permit Mr. Tenant to put his house into the list of assets from which to pay the company's debts. He insisted, but they were inexorable. This was highly gratifying to him, but

he was not content. Now he could meet all on equal terms.

We must forgive Mrs. Tenant if she felt a very great degree of exultation at this result. The affair between Hiram Meeker and her daughter had touched her so deeply (until Emma was away she did not feel how deeply), that she could not but indulge her triumph that now, when she encountered him, she was able to pass him with complete indifference. While her husband was crippled, she continued to feel scorn and contempt. Having regained her old position, she enjoyed a repose of spirits, and was no longer tantalized by recollection of the scenes of the last few months.

Emma Tenant had a most charming European tour. She was absent a year. Two or three months before her return, and while spending a few weeks among the Bernese Alps (I think Emma once told me it was at the Hotel Reichenbach, near Meyringen), she encountered an old acquaintance—that is, an acquaintance of her childhood—in the person of young Lawrence—Henry Lawrence—who was taking advantage of a business-trip abroad to view the glory and the majesty of Nature in the Oberland Bernois.

However much it may seem contrary to the theory of romantic young men and women, I am forced to state that, notwithstanding her former love for Hiram Meeker, Emma Tenant had not been six months in Europe before the wound might be considered healed.

As her mind became enlarged by taking in the variety of scenes which were presented—scenes ever fresh and changing—she was better enabled to judge how far such a person

as Hiram Meeker could ultimately make her happy. Day by day she saw his character more clearly and in a truer light, and could thus fully appreciate the narrow escape she had from a life of wretchedness.

Before she encountered young Lawrence, she had become entirely disenchanted. The former illusion was fully dispelled, and her heart left quite free to be engrossed by a new interest.

Young ladies and gentlemen! am I giving currency to theories which you are accustomed to consider heretical? I am but recording the simple truth.

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By the time Emma Tenant had reached New York the affianced of Henry Lawrence (subject, of course, to her parents' approbation), Hiram Meeker was engaged to—Miss Thorne.

Once decided on his course, Hiram pursued his object with the tenacity of a slow-hound.

He took advantage of every weakness. He operated on her jealous nature so as to subject her to all the tortures which that spirit begets. By turns he flattered and browbeat her. He was sunny and amiable, or crabbed and austere, as suited his purpose. In fact, he so played on the poor girl, whose vanity and suspicion and jealous fear of a rival were intense, that he made her life miserable. She was even thwarted in the quarter where her strength principally lay. For Hiram treated her fortune as a mere nothing at all. If she, as had been her custom, headed a subscription for some charity at St. Jude's, Hiram was sure



to put down his name for double the amount, in close proximity to hers.

At last, her spirit was completely broken by the persevering, unsparing, flattering, cajoling, remorseless Hiram. So she stopped quarrelling, and yielded. Then, how charming was our hero!—amiable, kind, desirous to please, yet despotic to an extent: never yielding the power and ascendancy he had gained over her.

The great point now was to prevent any marriage settlement. Being married, since Miss Thorne's property was all "personal," he could at once possess himself of it. Prior to the engagement, Hiram had often repeated that he would marry no woman who maintained a separate estate. And so much did he dwell on this, that Miss Thorne was actually afraid to speak to her solicitor on the subject.

In the summer succeeding the gay season we have spoken of, Hiram Meeker and Arabella Thorne were united at St. Jude's by the Rev. Augustus Myrtle, in presence of "the most aristocratic and fashionable concourse ever assembled on such an occasion."

The Bennetts were present in great profusion. Mrs. Myrtle, all smiles and tears, stood approvingly by. Mr. Myrtle, so all declared, never performed the ceremony so well before. Miss Innis had a conspicuous place in the proceedings, she being the first of the four bridesmaids who attended Arabella to the altar.

I have never been able to explain her selection of one she had so feared and hated as a rival, nor Miss Innis's acceptance. But there she stood, very beautiful, and apparently much interested in what was going on.

. . . . .

After they had returned from their wedding tour, Hiram took possession of his wife's securities. His heart throbbed with excitement and his eyes glistened as he looked them over.

Mr. Bennett had fallen considerably short of the mark. Here were considerably more than two hundred and fifty thousand dollars!

Just then real estate had fallen to the extreme lowest point after the collapse of the former high, speculative prices.

Hiram took immediate advantage of this state of things.

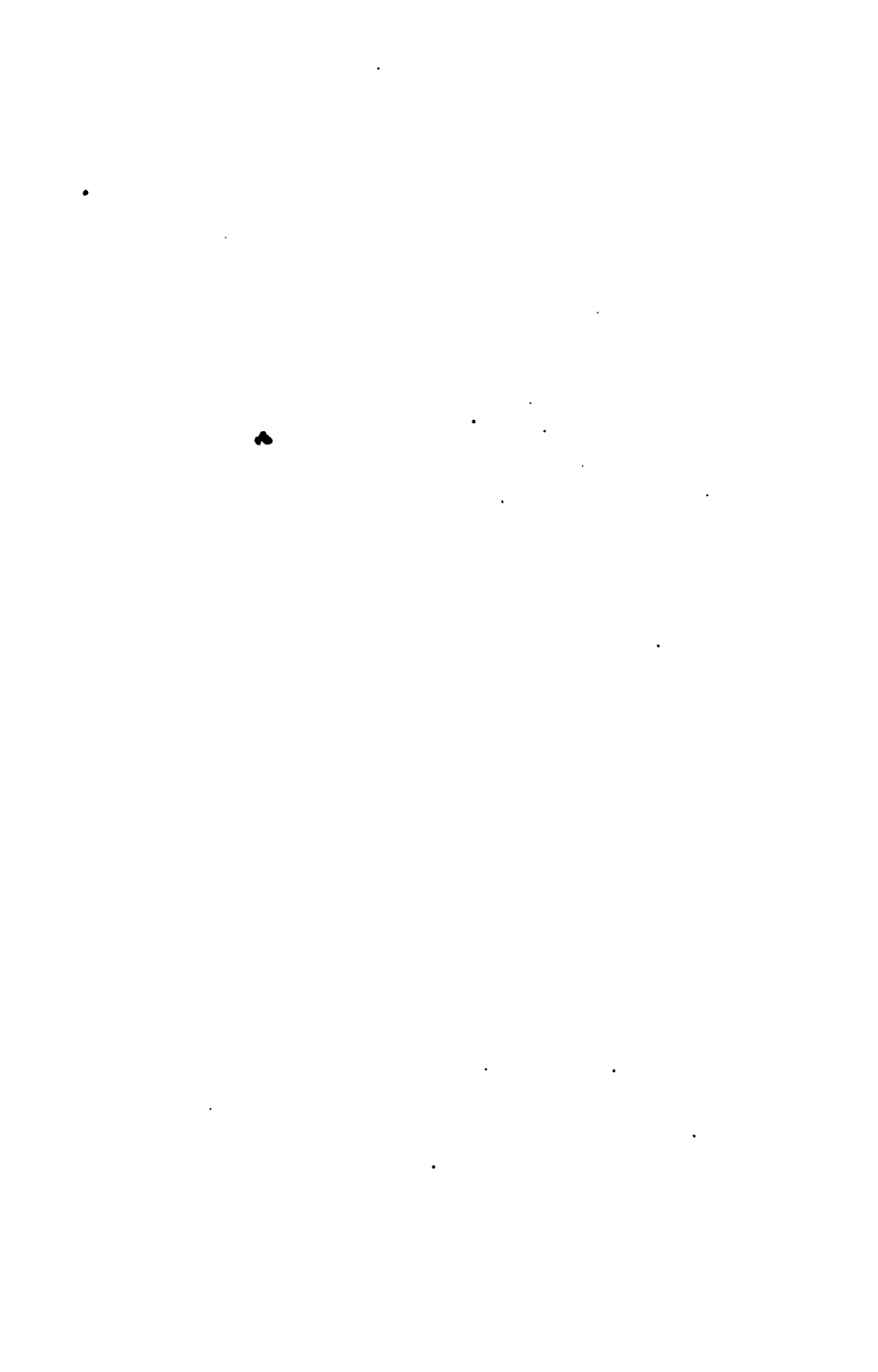
During the next three months he had sold out his wife's securities, and invested two hundred thousand dollars in vacant lots admirably situated in the upper part of the city. The balance he put into his business.

From that period it did not require a heavy discounting of the future to write Hiram Meeker a **MILLIONNAIRE**.

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**END OF PART II.**

**"Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."—SCRIPTURE.**



## WAS HE SUCCESSFUL?

### PART THE LAST.

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#### CHAPTER I.

MORE than twenty-five years have elapsed since the events narrated in the last chapter.

New York has become a great and magnificent metropolis. The avenues of the city extend for miles beyond the old landmarks. The adjacent farms have been converted into lots, and covered with handsome houses. The old buildings are torn down, and new and elegant ones erected in their place. The streets are thronged with a purely cosmopolitan class. You behold specimens of every nation under the heavens jostling the citizens on the sidewalk, or filling the omnibuses which choke the way. And from the commingled sounds of the tramp of horses, the rolling of vehicles, and the tread of human beings, there arises through the day and far into the night a perpetual but muffled roar from this great thoroughfare.

. . . . .

It is a lovely October afternoon—one of those mellow days for which this latitude is so remarkable—possessing

the softness and genial temperature of summer, without its scorching heat.

The world of fashion has returned from the Spas, the mountains, the sea-side. Elegant equipages pass up and down, or stop before the favorite resorts for shopping. The streets and sidewalks are literally crowded, as if it were some grand gala-time.

It is nearly four o'clock. Walking slowly up Broadway is a person probably about fifty-five, of medium height, inclining to be stout, who carries his hands behind him as he proceeds thoughtfully along. His dress is particularly neat. His hat, while it conceals an excessive baldness, permits the escape of a quantity of light hair, quite unmingled with gray, which fringes the back of the head. At a distance, his complexion looks soft and fair; but, on closer observation, it has the appearance of smooth leather. Occasionally he raises his face to regard a building, as if he had a special interest in so doing; then one may see a light-blue eye, clear and icy as a fine December day, having an expression like a flint.

He walks on. Two young men are just passing him. One says to his companion—

“Do you know who that is?”

“Which?”

“That old fellow, right by your side.”

“No. Who is it?”

“That’s Hiram Meeker.”

“You don’t say so!”

He pauses, and lets the individual alluded to pass, that he may take a good look at him.

"I would like to have some of his cash, anyhow. What do you suppose he is worth?"

"Oh, there is no telling; he is variously estimated at from five to ten millions, but nobody knows. Started without a penny, as clerk in a ship-chandler's store."

Yes, reader, that *is* Hiram. [We shall continue our familiarity, and call him, when we see fit, by his first name.] That is our old acquaintance, Hiram Meeker, who commenced at Hampton, with Benjamin Jessup—Hiram Meeker of Burnsville, now the great Hiram Meeker of New York.

We have devoted a large part of this volume to Hiram's early career, going into the minutiae of his education, his religious training, and his business life. This was not without design. For the reader, once in possession of these circumstances, had no need to be informed in detail of the achievements of those years in which Hiram worked vigorously on through successive stages in his career, while his heart grew hard as the nether millstone.

As you see him now, pursuing his way along the street, he has really but one single, absorbing idea—ACQUISITION. True, he clings to his belief in the importance of church-membership. He has long been the leading vestryman at St. Jude's. He is the friend and adviser of the Bishop.

Famous is Hiram Meeker the millionaire!

Famous is Hiram Meeker the Churchman!

Still, I repeat, he has but one thought—one all-absorbing, all-engrossing passion.

You have not forgotten, I am sure, the early calculating policy of Hiram, and to what degree he had carried it when

we took leave of him. Imagine this developed and intensified day by day, month by month, and year by year, over more than a quarter of a century.

Since we first made his acquaintance, he has kept on rigidly. In all his intercourse with his fellow-beings—man to man—with high and low—with the sex—with his nearest relations,—he has never, no, *never* looked to any thing except what he considered his personal advantage. He is a member of the Church; he performs certain rites and formulæ of our holy religion; he subscribes to charities: but it is to secure to himself personally the benefit of heaven and whatever advantages may be connected with it. So that, where he has acted wisely and well, the action has been robbed of all merit, because there was no wise or right intent, but simply a politic end in view.

Look at him, as he pushes along in the crowd! Notwithstanding his millions, he is there a mere atom out of this world's creation. He has not a sympathy beyond himself—not a hope which does not centre in self—no connecting link with any thing outside or beyond—no thought, no emotion, no sense, no feeling, which are not produced by a desire to advance the interests of "*H. Meeker*," here and hereafter.

. . . . .

We will go on in advance of Hiram, and enter his house before him.

It is one of the best in the city. Not showy, but large, ample, and well constructed; indicating the abode of a solid man. It is situated in one of the finest streets far "up-town."

Before the door are two equipages. One is *Mrs. Meek-*



er's carriage, very handsome and in exquisite taste. The other is a stylish single-seat phaeton, with two horses tandem, and a rather flashy-looking servant in gay livery.

Let us go into the house.

Mrs. Meeker is just preparing for a short shopping-excursion before dinner. At the distance from which we regard her, Time seems to have dealt very kindly with her. The figure is quite the same, the style the same, the face the same, and you see no gray hairs. In short, you behold our old friend Arabella, slightly exaggerated, perhaps—but it is she.

She leaves her room, and prepares to descend.

As she passes to the top of the staircase, a faint voice exclaims—

“Mamma!”

Mrs. Meeker stops with an expression of impatience, turns and enters the adjoining apartment.

On a sort of couch or ottoman reclines a young lady, who, you can perceive at a glance, is a victim of consumption.

It is their oldest child, who for five years has been an invalid, and whose strength of late has been fast declining. One can hardly say how she would have looked in health, for disease is a fearful ravager. Still, Harriet (she is named for Mr. Meeker's mother) probably resembled her own mother more than any one else in personal appearance, but beyond that there was no resemblance whatever. Neither was she like her father, but more like her grandfather Meeker, of whom her uncle says she always reminds him. She possesses a kind and happy nature; and since she was stricken by the terrible malady, she has grown day by day

more gentle and more heavenly, as her frame has been gradually weakened under its insidious inroads.

When Mrs. Meeker came in, she demanded, in an irritated tone, "What do you want, Harriet?"

"I wish very much, mamma, you would send and ask Uncle Frank if he will not come and see me to-day."

"I think it very improper, Harriet, for you to be sending for your uncle when you are under Dr. Alsop's charge."

"But, mamma, Uncle Frank does not prescribe for me. I do not send for him as my physician."

"It looks very odd, though," continued Mrs. Meeker, with increased irritation. "I am sure Dr. Alsop would not like it if he knew it."

"Dr. Alsop met Uncle Frank here one day, and they appeared to be excellent friends. I am sure there can be no misunderstanding on his part, and papa says he is quite willing."

"Do as you like, child," replied Mrs. Meeker. Then turning to the nurse she said, "You may ring, and send Thomas with a message from Miss Meeker, if she desires."

"Thank you, dear mamma. If you will come to me, I will give you a kiss."

The door closed before the sentence was finished, and Mrs. Meeker descends the staircase, passes through the hall, and steps into the open air.

Alas, what is revealed to you! Marks, grim and ghastly marks of those years of wear and tear, which the sunlight, that remorseless trier of woman's looks, makes quite apparent. What evidence of irritability, of discontent, and general disappointment and disgust with every thing and all

things, is revealed in those deep-cut lines and angles which in the light of day become painfully visible under the delicate layers of Baume d'Osman, rouge, and pearl-powder!

Mrs. Meeker adjusts her veil so as to hang gracefully down to the tip of her nose, and enters her carriage.

I had nearly forgotten to point out a very genteel-looking young man in black, who wears a distressingly long frock-coat and a white neckcloth, who escorts Mrs. Meeker to her carriage, and enters it after her.

Arabella has not lost her *penchant* for young clergymen, nor young clergymen for her.

Leaving Mrs. Meeker to her excursion, we go into the parlors.

On one of the sofas is a young fair girl, not more than eighteen years old. Her complexion, eyes, and general cast of features, exhibit a striking likeness to her father. She is of medium height, and her form is fine and well rounded. Add to these the adornments and appliances of dress, and you have before you a very beautiful young woman.

Seated on the same sofa, and in very close proximity, is a person whose *status* it will be difficult to decide from mere inspection. He is a tall, large, coarse-featured, but well-proportioned man, with black hair, inclining to curl, dark complexion, and very black eyes. His age is possibly thirty. He is showily dressed, with a vast expanse of cravat and waistcoat. Across the latter stretches a very heavy gold chain, to which is attached a quantity of seals and other trinkets known as charms. A massive ring, with coat-of-arms and crest carved on it, encircles the little finger of the right hand. Every point of the dress and toilet is in

keeping with what I have already described. The hair-dresser has been devoted. There has been no stint of oil and pomade in the arrangement of whiskers and mustache. In short, judging the individual by a certain standard, which passes current with a good many people, you would pronounce him remarkably well "got up."

Looking at the fine and delicate-featured girl, in whose surroundings you behold evidences of so much taste and refinement, you could scarcely be made to believe that the gross organization by her side is to her liking. Yet I assure you she is in love with the handsome animal—"madly in love" with him, as she herself avows!

This girl is the youngest of Hiram's three children. She is named for her mother, but is called by all her acquaintance, Belle. And she is *belle* every way—except in temper and disposition. Resembling her father so closely, she inherits her mother's jealous irritability and tyrannical nature. She is beautiful only to look on. She is a spoiled child besides.

I cannot avow that Hiram has any genuine parental affection. He is so entirely absorbed in gathering in his harvests from the golden fields at his command, that I think in God's providence this is denied to him.

[Else he would exhibit some tenderness and love for the poor, sinking child who is lying in her chamber, with no companion but her nurse.]

But there is that about the youngest which commends itself (I know no other way to express it) to his senses. She is fair and young, and graceful and a beauty, and she resembles him; and he loves to look at her and have her

near him when he is at home, and to pet her, after a sort.

Hiram is too much occupied, however, to attend at all to the well-being of his children, and his wife "has no taste for any thing of the kind." So, as I said, Belle grows up a spoiled child. She has never been subject to control, and has not the slightest idea of self-restraint.

This is her second season in society. She is universally admired—indeed, is quite "the rage."—"All the young men are dying for her"—I quote from the observations about town; but few have the hardihood to pay serious court to the daughter of Hiram Meeker.

Yet you perceive one man has ventured—successfully ventured.

Who is he? I do not wonder you inquire with some degree of curiosity. I shall proceed to gratify it.

The large, dark, coarse-visaged, foreign-looking fellow, who "lives but to adore the angel of beauty and perfection" at his side, and with whom the "angel" is so blindly infatuated, is Signor Filippo Barbone, a second-rate performer of the last season's opera *troupe*!

It is a fact, reader, so it will be vain for me to deny it.

What, meantime, can I say by way of explanation? I hardly know. This Signor Filippo, who is an impudent, audacious scamp, made the acquaintance of Belle two years ago, when she was a school-girl. She was amused at seeing him follow her persistently, and at last she permitted him to accost her.

The cunning fellow conducted himself with the utmost deference, not to say humility. He pretended not to have

the slightest knowledge who she was. He had been seized and subdued by her charms, her loveliness; and it was quite sufficient happiness for him to be permitted to watch for her and to tread in her steps day by day. He only wished to speak and tell her so, lest she might suppose him disrespectful.

The ice once broken, arrangements for accidental meetings followed.

Signor Filippo did not disclose himself, except to say his position was so far below hers, that he had but one hope, one aspiration, which was, that she would permit him to be her willing slave forever. He asked and expected nothing beyond the privilege of worshipping her.

But how happens it that Belle Meeker is desperately in love with the Signor?

I will endeavor to explain.

Possessing not one spark of sentiment or native refinement, accustomed to no restraint on her temper or will, she presents an example of a strong sensuous nature, uncontrolled by any fine moral instincts or perceptions.

This is why in person and appearance Signor Filippo is quite to her taste. The wily adventurer had made no mistake when he judged of the girl's nature. Understanding her arbitrary disposition, and her impatience of any restraint whatever, he adroitly maintained his air of extreme deference and respect, which was increased a thousand-fold on his discovering, as he pretended one day to do, who the object of his adoration was.

What an agony he was in, lest now he should not be permitted even to look on her! Though assured on this point,

he became reserved and shy, giving vent to his impassioned feelings by sighs and various mute but eloquent expressions.

Miss Belle began to be very impatient. These sentimental meetings had lasted more than a year. Meantime, she was "brought out." This made it difficult for her to keep up her stolen interviews, but she could now ask the Signor to the house.

To effect this, however, she must first bring over her mother. She informed her that the gentleman was a Neapolitan Count, who from political motives was forced to remain *perdu* for a time, and so forth, and so forth, and so forth. By dint of entreaty and argument, and exhibition of much temper, Belle persuaded her mother to say nothing to her father about the visits of this Count in disguise. The truth is, Mrs. Meeker had sometimes to request Belle's silence about little matters involving some expenditures which Mr. Meeker might consider extravagant. So, with occasional protests on her part, the Signor was permitted to make his visits.

Belle was too shrewd to attempt to impose on her father in such a case. She knew she could not succeed for a minute. So the intimacy is continued without his knowledge.

Long before this, she has been told by the Signor who he really is. He admits his late position in the *troupe*, but has a long story to recount of adverse fortune, and so on. His respectful manner still continues; it is the young lady who woos.

What is to be done? This state of things cannot last forever. Belle is more and more impatient. Her adorer still respectful and sad.

After this long but necessary digression, I return to our place in the front parlor where the lovers are seated.

"I must leave you, oh my angel—I must leave you! It is nearly time for your father to be here."

"I do not care if it is. I want you to stay."

"As you will, but—"

"If you really loved me, you would not be so indifferent," exclaims the young lady, passionately.

Then follows a scene. The result is, that Belle vows she will endure the suspense no longer. She will not ask her father's permission—she will marry him—yes, she *will* marry the Signor; and who dare prevent, who dare thwart her wishes!

The Signor takes impressive leave. His little plot approaches a *dénouement*. He walks with an "air noble" down the steps, and, mounting his phaeton, he takes the ribbons from the servant in gay livery, and the tandem team, after some well-trained prancing, dash forward.

Miss Belle is at the window, a delighted witness of the spectacle.

[The Signor has got up this fine turn-out, through the aid of a friend who is in the plot, especially to captivate her.]

"What a singular man!" she exclaims to herself. "How heroic he seems, controlling those wild creatures! Strange he should always be so diffident when in my society. There shall be an end of this; I cannot endure it!"

Presently she sees her father mount the steps, and runs to meet him, a little doubtful whether or not he beheld her lover start from before the door.



The greeting is most affectionate; Belle throws her arms caressingly around her father's neck.

"Who is your new visitor, Belle, who indulges in a tandem?" said Hiram, turning his penetrating eyes on his daughter, but with no suspicious glance.

"New visitor! What do you mean, papa?"

"I thought I saw a phaeton drive from here."

"Oh, that was at Mrs. Longworth's. Such a handsome man, though, papa! I was at the window when he got in."

Hiram patted his daughter's cheek playfully, and passed in. Keen and discerning as he was, his *child* could deceive him.

"Where is your mamma?" he asked.

"Out for a drive."

"Is Gus at home?"

"No, papa; I have not seen him to-day."

"Give orders to have dinner served punctually. I must go out immediately after."

## CHAPTER II.

I HAVE spoken of Hiram's three children.

The individual referred to in the last chapter as "Gus," is the oldest and the only son. He is, at this period, about twenty-three years of age.

His father undertook to bring him up in a very strict manner. He could, however, give none of his time to the important business of starting his son in the right path, and aiding him to continue in it. It was enough for Hiram that *he* was secure. He contented himself with laying down severe courses, and holding his boy to the strictest fulfilment of "duty."

The result can readily be imagined. The young man, as he grew up and understood fully his father's position, came to the conclusion that it was quite unnecessary for him to practise the strict habits which had been so despotically inculcated. So he gave loose rein to his fancies, and while yet in college was one of the wildest in the class. By his mother's interposition, he was sent abroad. He came back all the worse for the year's sojourn, and, young as he was, soon got to be a regular "man about town." He lived at home—ostensibly; but he was seldom to be seen in the house. He had come to entertain very little respect for his father; for he had a sort of native insight into his character.

He constantly complains of his miserly treatment, though Hiram makes his son a respectable allowance—more, I think, to be rid of the annoyance of his repeated and incessant applications, than for any other reason.

“Gus” was a favorite with his mother (I forgot to say she had named him Augustus Myrtle Meeker, with her husband’s full consent), and heavy were the drafts he made on her purse. This was a point of constant discussion between Mr. and Mrs. Meeker. It was of no use. The lady continued to indulge her only son, and her husband to protest against it.

Of late, Gus had been in possession of pretty large sums of money, which he certainly had not obtained either from his father or mother. And it was something connected with this circumstance which takes Hiram out immediately after dinner.

I think it is in place here to say something of Hiram Meeker’s domestic life.

Taking “Arabella” for just what the reader knows her to be, it is probable he has made her a better husband than ninety-nine men of a hundred would have made. True, he is master, in every respect. But this is just what Arabella requires. She would have been the death of any ordinary man in a short time. There is not the slightest danger of her injuring Hiram’s prospects of a long life, or of causing him an hour’s uneasiness. To be sure, he is despotic, but he is neither irritable nor unamiable. Besides, he has a great desire for social position (it aids in carrying out his plans), in which his wife is of real service. Hiram, although close and careful in all matters, is not what would be

called penurious. In other words, he makes liberal provision for his household, while he rules it with rigor; besides, in petty things he has not proved a tyrant.

On the whole, we repeat our conviction that Arabella has been fortunate in her husband. To be sure, she is fretful, discontented, peevish, irritable, cross; but that is her normal condition. At times Hiram has treated her with severity, but never with cruelty. He has borne quietly and with patience what would have set most husbands frantic; and has contented himself with remaining silent, when many would have been tempted to positive acts of violence.

Toward his sick child Hiram Meeker's conduct has been exemplary—that is the word. He considers the affliction a direct chastening of *him* from the Lord; and “whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.” He spends some moments with his daughter daily, but he has no more sympathy for her situation than if his heart were made of leather. Yet the best care is provided, the best medical attendance, and every thing done for the poor girl which is proper. Hiram even overrules his wife in many things where he thinks her severe toward the invalid, as in the instance of her wishing to see her Uncle Frank, who is our old acquaintance “Doctor Frank,” as you no doubt understand—now one of the first medical men of New York.

Although there has never been the least cordiality between the brothers since the Doctor came to the city, still they have kept on visiting terms. The Doctor has taken a deep interest in his invalid niece, and she is never so happy as when he is talking with her. He has told her to send for

him at any time when she feels disposed to do so, and he is a frequent visitor.

. . . . .

It was late before Mrs. Meeker returned. Something occurred to give her excursion a very unpleasant direction. She was engaged in turning over some new silks at Stewart's, while the young clerical gentleman stood admiringly by, when a man of very coarse appearance and vulgar aspect approached and placed a letter before her.

Mrs. Meeker was prepared to utter a faint shriek, but it occurred to her that it would not appear well where she was. The young clerical gentleman cast a look of disgust and indignation on the intruder, who did not stop to resent it, but turned quickly on his heel and left the place.

Mrs. Meeker, after waiting a moment to regain her composure, opened the note, and read as follows:

"DEAR MA: Come to me directly, and bring all the money you can. I am in a terrible fix!                      Gus."

Mrs. Meeker pushed aside the rich purple silk she was examining, with so much suddenness, that the young clerical gentleman could not but notice it.

"My dear madam, are you ill?" he asked, with a show of devotion distressing to witness.

"No, oh no; but this moment I recollect I have a commission to execute for a friend, which I had quite forgotten. And, do you know, I am going to ask you to drive home, and tell Belle not to delay dinner for me."

The young clerical gentleman bowed in acquiescence. For him to hear was to obey. But he felt curious to know

what was the cause of so abrupt a termination of the afternoon's shopping.

"I hope there was nothing unpleasant in that letter?"

It was presuming a good deal to ask such a question, but the young clerical gentleman could not restrain his curiosity.

"That letter!" exclaimed Mrs. Meeker, now quite herself again—"no, indeed; it is only a word from Augustus. What a queer creature, to send it by such a horrid fright of a man!" And Mrs. Meeker laughed.

The young clerical gentleman was thrown completely off the scent. He bowed and hurried to the carriage, leaving Mrs. Meeker still at the counter.

She looked carelessly over the different patterns, and said, in a languid tone, "I think I will not buy any thing to-day," to which the clerk obsequiously assented—he well knew whom he was serving—and Mrs. Meeker left the store.

Her carriage was out of sight; first she assured herself of that. Then she called a hack, and ordered it to be driven to a distant quarter of the city.

The carriage stopped at the number indicated in the note. Mrs. Meeker was met at the door by her son, who conducted her to a back room in the third story. It was dirty and in disorder. Bottles, wine-glasses, and tumblers were scattered around, and the atmosphere was full of the fumes of whiskey and tobacco.

What a spot for the son of Hiram Meeker to select, in which to receive his mother's visit!

What a place for the fastidious Arabella to enter!

As soon as they reached the room, Mrs. Meeker exclaimed, "Augustus! tell me, what does this mean?"

The young man, thus appealed to, stopped, and regarding his mother with a fierce expression, exclaimed—

"It means that I quit New York to-night!"

"Augustus! you are a cruel creature to alarm me in this way."

"It is so, mother. I have got into a bad scrape."

"Tell me just what it is, Augustus—tell me the whole truth."

"Well, a few weeks ago, I lost a large sum of money—no matter how. I asked father to help me. I made him a solemn promise, which I would have kept, provided he had given me what I required. He refused, and I used his name to raise it."

"O Augustus! Augustus!" exclaimed Mrs. Meeker, in genuine agony.

"It's no use groaning over it," said the young man. "It is done; and, what is worse, it is discovered! Father will know it to-night. What I want is, money enough to take me out of the country; and if you will not give it to me, I will cut my throat before you leave the room!"

Mrs. Meeker could only reply by sobs and hysterical exclamations.

"It is of no use, mother—I mean it!" continued the young man.

"Where are you going, Augustus?" said Mrs. Meeker, faintly.

"Across the water. Give me the money, and I shall be on board ship in an hour."

"I have only two hundred dollars in my purse," said his mother, mournfully, producing it.

"It will serve my purpose," answered her son. "You can send me more after you hear from me."

He took the money and put it in his pocket, and prepared to attend his mother to the door.

"But when shall I see you again, Augustus?" faltered Mrs. Meeker.

"Never!"

The parental feeling could no longer be restrained. She threw herself upon her son's neck, sobbing violently, and declared he should not leave her.

It did not avail. Although the young man's feelings seemed much softened, he resisted all her appeals. He unwound her arms with tenderness, and led her in silence down the staircase.

"Give my love to Harriet," he said. "Tell her I never will forget her."

He opened the door into the street—a moment after, he had regained his room; and the miserable mother was driving back to her magnificent abode.

The next day an ordinary sailing-vessel left New York for Liverpool, having on board the only son of Hiram Meeker.

When Mrs. Meeker reached her house, her husband had finished his dinner, and gone out. It was late when he returned—so late, that his wife had already retired.

In the morning, Mr. Meeker communicated to her the information of his son's disgraceful and criminal conduct. She listened with such an air of sorrow and distress, that it



did not occur to him that she manifested no surprise. She prudently, perhaps, forbore communicating the incidents of the previous evening, for she knew it would lead to a terrible reproof on his part. Besides, her present interference was far beyond any thing she had ever ventured on, and she stood in great terror of Hiram where important matters were concerned.

During the day, Hiram Meeker had intelligence of his son's flight. He received it with great outward composure, and with sensible inward relief.

The discovery of the fraud which Augustus had committed had also been borne with entire equanimity.

The fact is, Hiram, having thought best to conclude that his son was irreclaimable, searched the Scriptures to find the various eminent examples of disobedient, ungrateful, and wicked children; and he seemed to cherish with unction the idea of being numbered among the godly parents of a reprobate child.

His own position was so strong, so far above that of any ordinary man of wealth, that the circumstance of a dissolute son's raising a few thousand dollars by forging his name (after all, it was only a few thousand), could only produce an expression of sympathy for the honored father.

What to do with Augustus—that was the question which troubled him through the night; and the morning brought an agreeable solution of it.

His child, an only son, possessed of many noble and generous qualities, without any of his father's intense selfishness, was a wanderer and an outcast on the earth, and he unmoved, undisturbed, complacent!

It was soon known in the house what had become of Augustus. When Belle heard of it, she gave a shrug, and exclaimed, "Poor Gus!"

Harriet, the invalid, was deeply affected. Seeing how much she was sorrowing, her mother, whose heart was still tender from the recollection of her late parting with her boy, told her, under promise of secrecy (she knew she could trust her), that she had seen Augustus before he went away, and repeated the message with which she had been charged.

"O mamma!" exclaimed the poor girl, "we can save him—I know we can! You say he is to write you. We shall know where he is, and by-and-by he will come back."

"Your father will never permit it."

"Perhaps not immediately; but he will yield—I am sure he will yield."

"You do not know him as I know him," said Mrs. Meeker, in a tone so sepulchral, that it made her daughter start. "He will never yield—*never!*"

I think from that period the conduct of Mrs. Meeker toward her daughter was much less indifferent, not to say harsh, than it had previously been. Harriet was, in a way, connected with her last recollection of Augustus. And this spark of a mother's tenderness did, to an extent, spread a diffusing warmth over her whole nature.

## CHAPTER III.

HIRAM MEEKER had erected an entire block of buildings which he called "model houses for the poor."

By this observation the reader must not suppose I mean that they were provided *gratis* for that ever-present class. No. But they were made on a new plan, so as to give each family comfortable quarters, as if each had a house of their own.

Hiram Meeker received great credit for the "act of benevolence" in building these homes for poor people. Doubtless it was a very great improvement over the old arrangement. Still, Hiram's block of buildings netted him just fifteen per cent. per annum, after deducting all possible charges and expenses against the property.

To secure such a handsome return there had, of course, to be very strict and careful management. Hiram's agent in this department was a man entirely satisfactory to him, and with whom he never interfered. Frequent complaints were made of this man's severity, to which Hiram would pay no attention. It was impossible for him to look after all the details of his various affairs. An agent once appointed, people must transact their business with him.

This was reasonable, as a rule; but Hiram's iniquity was displayed in the nature of the men whom he selected to

manage for him. You see he placed exacting and relentless folks in charge, and then tried to avoid the responsibility of their acts of severity.

One day, a few weeks after the circumstances recorded in the last chapter, Hiram was seated in his inner and very private office, outside of which was his regular office, where was his confidential clerk; and beyond that the counting-room of the princely house of "Hiram Meeker"—for he admitted no partners—which several rooms were protected against persons having no business to transact with the house, but who wished to see Mr. Meeker personally.

This class found entrance very difficult. They had first to announce the nature of their business. If it required personal attention, they were introduced to a species of general agent, who was high in Mr. Meeker's confidence. If this last character was satisfied, then an interview could be had with the great man himself.

I say, one day Hiram was seated in his most private apartment, quite alone. He was engaged in calculations for some large real-estate improvements involving an outlay of at least a million of dollars. He had given orders not to be interrupted, and was deeply absorbed in his plans, when the door opened, and a young man came in with a quick step.

Hiram did not look up. He supposed it was some one connected with the establishment.

"Is this Mr. Meeker?" was asked, in a vigorous, earnest voice.

Hiram raised his head, and beheld an individual apparently five-and-twenty, dressed rather carelessly, but in the

manner of a gentleman. He was of goodly proportions, and had dark hair, a clear complexion, and keen gray eyes.

Hiram made no reply to the question, except to ask, "What is your name?"

"Dr. Ephraim Peters," said the young man with the sparkling gray eyes.

"Who admitted you?" continued Hiram.

"I had a pressing errand of life and death, and could not wait for a formal presentation."

"What is your business?"

Dr. Peters took a seat with considerable deliberation, while Hiram waited, with a displeased look, for him to reply.

"You are the owner of the block of 'model houses,' as they are called?"

Hiram nodded.

"A patient of mine, a laboring man, is one of your tenants. He broke his leg a few months ago, falling from a scaffolding. He has had hard work to live since. Thursday his wife was taken ill. Yesterday was rent-day—he pays monthly in advance. He could not get the money, and your agent refuses to give him any grace. Now what I want to say is, the poor woman can't be moved without danger to her life."

"Well?"

"Well," echoed the other, "I want to get an order from you to let her remain."

"See the agent."

"I have seen him; and, what is more, although I am poor enough myself—for I am just starting, you see, in

New York—I offered to pawn my watch and pay the rent myself, but the man would not take it.”

“No?”

“No, he would not. He said they had gone over the time, and he did not want tenants who depended on charity to pay rent; besides, he said he was afraid the woman was going to die, and he did not want a death in the building—it would give it a bad name.”

The young man paused, with the air of one who had made a successful argument, and was waiting for an auspicious result.

The only notice Hiram took of him was to say, in a decided tone, as he resumed his calculations, “I can’t interfere.”

“CAN’T interfere!” said the other, with naive astonishment. “Why, what do you mean? It will kill the woman, I tell you! You *must* interfere.”

“Young man, you forget yourself. I repeat, go to the agent. I shall not interfere.”

“Well, well,” said the young physician, rising, “I have heard of hard hearts and cruel men who grind the faces of the poor, but you are the first I have seen. I don’t envy you, though. I would not stand in your shoes for a good deal.”

While Dr. Ephraim Peters was delivering himself of the above, Hiram had struck a small bell which stood before him, and a young man entered in response to the summons just as the doctor concluded.

“Holmes, send for a policeman.”

“Yes, sir.” And Holmes withdrew to execute the commission.

"Do you mean that for me?" exclaimed the young doctor, choking with passion, while the gray eyes flashed dangerously.

Hiram made no reply, but occupied himself intently with the figures before him.

"I say," said the other, in a louder tone, "do you mean that for me? I suppose you do, and I have half a mind that the errand shall not be for nothing. Yes, I have *more* than half a mind to break every bone in your worthless body!"

He looked at that moment, with his clinched hand, erect figure, and energetic presence, quite capable of carrying out the threat.

Still, Hiram paid not the slightest attention to this demonstration, but worked at his figures, more abstracted than ever. He knew it was merely a matter of time; the policeman would arrive in two or three minutes, and, as he hoped, would catch the doctor in the midst of his violent outburst of passion.

On the other hand, our young hero soon discovered that he was to get no satisfaction from his antagonist, as he now considered him, by the course he was pursuing. He, too, began to count the moments—well aware that he had not much time to spare.

He determined to change his tactics.

"After all," he exclaimed, in a deliberate tone, "I will not give you the chance for a case of assault and battery. I think better of the whole matter. Nature is slower, to be sure, but she will do the work better than I could. Do you know what an advantage I have over you? I am twenty-

five, and you fifty-five. Money cannot buy back those thirty years. That's about all I have to say.

"Not quite, either," he continued, still more deliberately. "I am a medical man, accustomed to judge of a person's condition by observation. Do you want me to tell you what is the matter with you?"

Dr. Ephraim Peters paused, as if for a reply.

A natural instinct, which acts without our volition, took such sudden possession of Hiram, that he raised his eyes from his papers and turned them upon the questioner, as if expecting him to continue.

"I see the subject interests you," said the doctor. "Take my advice. Sit over your papers less, and exercise more—or you will be struck with paralysis within five years! Good-day."

He turned and quit the apartment with a slow and dignified step.

As he advanced a little way along the street, he encountered Holmes, still in search of a police-officer.

He had been at two or three places where one was always visible; but, as usual when wanted, none were to be found.

"Holmes," said the doctor, addressing him as if he had known him all his life, "hurry back to your employer; he wants you particularly."

Holmes sped off at the word, delighted to be relieved in his search; and Dr. Ephraim Peters went on his way.

He was not mistaken as to the effect of the last attack. His chance shot struck Hiram amidships. The latter continued gazing on vacancy for a moment or two after the doctor had left the room.



"Paralysis—paralysis!" he muttered. "That is what killed mother!"

Hiram started up, and walked across the room. He pinched his arms and his legs, and both his cheeks. He fancied his left side had less sensibility than his right.

"My brain *is* overworked, that's a fact. Dr. Joslin has told me so frequently. I must ride every morning before breakfast; I ought not to have neglected it.

"Paralysis! how did he come to say paralysis?"—and he commenced pinching himself again.

In the midst of these demonstrations, Holmes entered.

Hiram turned on him angrily. He had forgotten about sending him for a police-officer.

"I thought you wanted me," said the young man, timidly.

"No, I do not!"

Holmes retreated.

Hiram Meeker put on his overcoat, took his hat, and, though still early, prepared to walk all the way to his house.

One thing was uppermost in his mind—paralysis!

Hiram reached his house in a very pious state of mind. His wife and Belle were both out, and he went immediately to Harriet's room.

She was delighted to welcome her father so early, and she told him so.

Hiram regarded the attenuated form and pale, thin face of his daughter, and I hope I am right in saying that he felt a touch of pity when he reflected on her distressed situation, shut out from the world, and slowly wasting away.

At any rate, he returned her greeting with more than ordinary kindness, and seated himself by the side of the couch where she was reclining.

[Had you the power to look into the HEART, even as the Omniscient regards it, which, think you, would most challenge your pity, Hiram or his daughter?]

"I fear you are lonely, Harriet, so much of the day by yourself."

"Not very lonely, papa. You know I have a good many visits, and Margaret (the nurse) is invaluable. She reads to me whenever I desire; and she is so cheerful always, that—"

"Has your Uncle Frank been here to-day?" interrupted Hiram.

"No, papa, but he is coming in to-morrow."

"What time, think you?"

"Uncle generally comes about six o'clock. He says he reserves his last visit before dinner for me."

"Ask him to dine with us. Tell him I want to see him particularly."

"Indeed, I will!" said Harriet, joyfully, for she knew there was not much cordiality between them.

Now Hiram had suddenly conceived the idea of consulting Doctor Frank about any latent tendency to paralysis in his constitution, and whether it was hereditary or not, and so forth, and so forth. Aside from his high reputation as a physician, he knew his brother could naturally judge better about that than any one else. His mind had wandered, therefore, from his daughter back to himself.

Fortunately, she did not understand the selfish nature of the interruption.

"I wish you would come home as early every day, papa. How little you are with us!"

"It is a great self-denial, my child—very great," responded Hiram; "but on the rich fall a heavy responsibility—very heavy—and I must bear it. Providence has so ordered. We must uphold society. We have to sustain law and order—law and order."

He should have said that it was law and order which sustained *him*.

[Ah, reader, it is a mighty *moral restraint* which makes the crowd wait patiently *outside*.]

Harriet heaved a deep sigh. She could not deny what her father had so pertinently expressed, yet these high-sounding words made no impression on her.

"Alas!" she said, mournfully, "if I were a man, I should never wish to be rich."

Hiram was preparing to make a harsh reply, but looking at his daughter, her wan features at that moment were so expressive of every finer feeling, that his baser nature was subdued before it.

He took her hand kindly, and said, with a smile, "My dear child, you know nothing about these things."

"I suppose not, papa; but I have made you smile, and that is worth something."

The interview was not prolonged. Hiram soon felt a restless feeling come over him. It occurred to him, just then, that he would have time before dinner to take a look at the locality which he was preparing to occupy for his real-estate improvements.

He told Harriet so, and, repeating his request that she

should induce her uncle to stay to dinner, he left her apartment.

As the door closed, his daughter sighed again. For a while she appeared to be absorbed in thought. Recovering, she directed the nurse to proceed with the book she had in reading.

We dare not inquire what was passing in her mind during those few moments of reflection. Perhaps, through that strange discrimination which is sometimes permitted to those appointed to die, she had a partial insight into her father's real nature.

I trust not. I hope she was spared that trial. It is an awful thing for a child to awaken to a sense of a parent's unworthiness!

## CHAPTER IV.

THE two brothers had met—had met more congenially than they ever met before. This was all Hiram's doings. He seemed like a new creature in his bearing toward Dr. Frank, who could not (indeed, he had no wish to do so) resist the influence of his cordial treatment. After dinner, they sat together in the library. They chatted of the old, old times when Frank was in college, and Hiram, a little bit of a fellow, was his pet and plaything during the vacations.

"We have done something, Frank, to keep up the Meeker name in New York," said the millionaire, when that topic was exhausted. "You are at the top of the profession, and I—I have accomplished a good deal."

Hiram spoke in such a genial, mellow tone, that Frank was touched.

"Yes," he replied; "*you* have at least achieved wonders. Do you remember what mother used always to prophesy about you? It is fulfilled tenfold."

"Poor mother!" sighed Hiram.

"Ah, yes! she was carried off very unexpectedly. What a vigorous constitution she had, to all appearance!"

"Do you know, Frank, they tell me I may look for a similar visitation at her age?"

"You? nonsense! Who has been filling your ears with such stuff?"

"Stuff or not, so I am advised seriously. What think you of it?"

Thus appealed to, Dr. Frank regarded his brother more critically.

"That is right," said Hiram. "Now that you are here, give me an examination."

Dr. Frank thereupon asked several pertinent questions, to which satisfactory replies were made. He sounded Hiram's chest: it was responsive as a drum. Then he proceeded to manipulate him in a more professional way. He put his ear close down, and held it for a minute, to get the pulsation of the heart. This he repeated two or three times.

Hiram's face grew anxious.

"You find something wrong," he said.

His brother made no reply, except to ask more questions.

At last he exclaimed, "You are all right, Hiram—all right. There *is* a little irregularity about the action of the heart: it is not chronic, but connected with the digestive organs. You are in as good health as a man could ask to be. Only, don't use your brain quite so much; it interferes with your digestion, and that in you affects the action of the heart. It is not worth mentioning, I assure you" (Hiram was looking alarmed); "but, since you can just as well as not, I say, take more exercise, and give your brain a holiday now and then."

"Thank you—thank you! So you don't think there is

any thing in the idea that I shall be—be—struck with—with paralysis—at about the same age that mother was?”

“Pure nonsense, Hiram—utter nonsense!” exclaimed Dr. Frank, cheerfully. [He knew how foolish it is to alarm one.]

“Still, exercise, exercise. That we ought all to do.”

The next day, Hiram commenced his morning rides; one hour before breakfast regularly.

He had fought the battle of life, and had won. Now he was called on to go into another contest. He set to work at this with his customary assiduity.

No one who saw the millionaire on his horse, trotting sharply over the road very early in the morning, understood really what was going on.

One day, however, Dr. Ephraim Peters caught sight of him, spurring on under full headway, as if every thing depended on the work he had in hand.

“Do you know who that is, and what he is about?” asked the young doctor of his companion.

“No.”

“It is Hiram Meeker, *fighting Death!*”

## CHAPTER V.

As the gay season progressed, the love-affair between Signor Filippo Barbone and the daughter of the millionaire was not permitted to languish.

The Signor was not in society.

Much as she might desire to do so, Belle dared not venture on the hazardous experiment of introducing into her own aristocratic circle one who had so lately figured as a second-rate opera-singer. He would have been recognized at once, and the whole town agitated by the scandal.

Belle knew this very well. Yet, strange to say, it did not in the least weaken her infatuation for this coarse fellow. On the contrary, I think it stimulated it. Self-willed and imperious, she tolerated with extreme impatience any restraint whatever. In this instance, it was the more tantalizing and exciting, because she felt that the world would be in opposition to her ; while her lover adroitly added fuel to the flame, by protesting that he would no longer consent to be so unjust, so selfish, so criminal, as to attempt to absorb her attention, or even intrude on her notice. True, he should himself fade away and perish (he looked very much like it); what of that? What were misery and death to him, compared with her ease and peace of mind?

Thereupon he would disappear for two or three days,



during which time Belle would work herself into a fever of excitement. And when he did return, unable, as he would say, to keep his oath to himself never to see her again, she would receive him with such emotion and such passionate demonstrations of delight, that the wily knave was satisfied he had completed his conquest.

Things were at just this pass, when Hiram received an anonymous letter, warning him in vague terms of what was going on, but mentioning no names.

Hiram was thunder-struck. On reflection, he was convinced that it was the work of some envious person, who had got up the note to cause him or his daughter annoyance; or else that it was a miserable joke, perpetrated by some foolish fellow. So entirely was he assured that one or the other hypothesis was correct, that he dismissed the matter from his mind. He carried the note home, however, and handed it to Belle in a playful manner, while he bestowed his customary caress, and received a kiss in return.

"Young lady, what do you think of that?" he asked.

It was fortunate—or rather most unfortunate—that Hiram did not entertain the slightest suspicion of his daughter: else he would have been led to scrutinize her countenance as he made the remark.

Like most persons who are accustomed to decide for themselves, he never questioned the correctness of his judgment after it was once formed.

Belle, for an instant, felt the floor sinking away under her feet!

It was only for an instant.

With the readiness for which the sex are so remarkable, she at once gave way to a most violent exhibition of temper. She walked up and down the room, apparently in a transport of rage; she tore the note into a hundred pieces, and *threw them into the grate.*

What was to be done? What would her father do to punish the miscreant who had dared take such a liberty with her name? Boldly she stopped before him, and asked the question.

During these exhibitions, Hiram stood smiling all the while. Belle was very handsome, and never, as he thought, so brilliant as at that moment, giving vent to her woman's passion.

It was really so. Her form, her face, her eyes, worked so harmoniously in the scene she had got up to cover what was below the surface, that she did present, to any one whose senses were arbiters, a most beautiful display.

"You are laughing at me, papa—I see very plainly you are laughing at me! I will not endure it! I—"

"Belle," interrupted her father, "you little goose, what do you think I care for the scribbling of any fool that chooses to disgrace himself? What should you, my daughter, care? To be sure, I can understand why you may suddenly give way to your feelings; but there is reason in all things. Don't you think the miserable fellow who penned that scrawl (by-the-way, you have very foolishly destroyed it, provided you did wish to trace it out)—I say, don't you think the fellow who perpetrated the ridiculous joke would be pleased enough to see how you take it?"

He took his daughter by the arm—a very beautiful arm

—and gave her a little shake—a playful, pleasant shake. Looking her in the face, he said: “Answer me, Belle—am I not right? Have you not sense enough to see that I am right?”

“Oh, I suppose so, papa. You are always right. That is, I never can answer your arguments; but—”

“That will do, Belle. Now run off to your room, and come down quite yourself for dinner.”

Belle gave her father an arch smile, to show how obedient she was, and bounded away.

Hiram watched his daughter with delight as she ran up the staircase, and his heart exulted in the possession of a child so charming and attractive.

## CHAPTER VI.

ABOUT two weeks after Hiram's interview with Dr. Ephraim Peters, he had occasion to spend a long evening in company with certain influential members (of which he, of course, was the most influential) of St. Jude's.

It was past eleven o'clock when the meeting broke up. It was a clear, cold December night, and Hiram buttoned his coat quite to his chin as he descended the steps to commence his walk home. Some had carriages in waiting; but he, fully alive to his brother's advice, preferred to go on foot. One gentleman kept him company for a couple of blocks; after that, he proceeded alone.

As he passed the corner of a street which ran at right angles to the one he was pursuing, a man came suddenly upon him, and, standing square in his path, demanded in a savage tone, "Do you want your wood split?"

Hiram turned quickly aside, to avoid the questioner; but he had time to observe that he was an athletic man, with a limping gait, and a fierce, demoniacal countenance. He carried in his hand something like a butcher's cleaver; and before Hiram could escape, he repeated the question—"Do you want your wood split?"

Hiram uttered a hasty "No," in response, and walked swiftly forward.

The stranger was not to be so easily disposed of. He put himself before the millionaire a second time, and repeated his question.

Hiram Meeker was not a coward—that is, so far as his brain served him; and we all know he had enough of that. Finding he was not to get rid of the unknown so readily, he stopped and regarded him with careful scrutiny.

The other repeated his question still again—"Do you want your wood split?"

Hiram was not slow to perceive that the man was insane, and he endeavored to humor him.

"Yes," he said, "I want my wood split very much indeed. It is too late to-night; but come to my house to-morrow, and you shall have the job."

"Oh, no, no, no!" cried the other, "I work only by night—only by night—and I cannot go to your house—you must come to mine!"

He laid hold of Hiram's arm with a tenacious grasp.

"I must first go home," said Hiram, calmly, "and send my wood round for you to split."

"Not so, not so," retorted the maniac. "It has already been sent. Come and see!"—and he began pulling at Hiram's arm—not with ferocity, but with a doggedness almost worse.

Hiram looked up and down the street. Not a soul was visible. The creature who stopped his way was a powerful man—was armed with a deadly weapon—was mad.

Hiram came swiftly to a conclusion. He would appear to yield, and in the walk he was about to take it was almost a certainty that they would encounter some one. So he

replied, in a good-natured manner, "Well, if the wood has been sent to you, we had better go and have it split at once."

"That's the talk—that's the talk! But we must hurry. Come on—come quick, and you will see how I will do it up."

He did not relax his hold of Hiram's arm. The two walked rapidly forward—much more rapidly than Hiram desired; but the crazy man kept exclaiming: "We must make haste. I promised *him* I would not leave the room. No more would I; but you see, if I can earn the money, I am all right—all right—all right!

"How much have *you* got?" he asked, stopping abruptly, and turning suddenly on Hiram.

"I have got ever so much. Now I think of it, suppose I pay you on the spot, so that you can go ahead and split the wood? It is getting late, you see."

"That won't do—that won't do. I want *him* to have the money! Come—come along, and give it to him."

On they pressed, till at length the man exclaimed: "Here we are! Don't you perceive?"

He had stopped before an old and very common-looking house. In the second story one could see a light burning. The madman motioned Hiram to enter. The millionaire was glad to discover that he was so near the end of his journey, and in a perfectly respectable neighborhood. Not doubting that he would find the apartment occupied, and quite sure there were inhabitants in the other part of the house, he proceeded to mount the stairs with alacrity, his companion following close at his heels.

It was with a sense of quiet relief that Hiram opened the door into a well-lighted room. This feeling was suddenly changed to one of horror on ascertaining that there was no one in the apartment, but that on a bed at the farther end of it was extended the corpse of a woman, already laid out and ready for the coffin! He stepped quickly backward, but it was too late. The madman was close behind him, and egress was out of the question.

"Come," he said, "you need not be afraid; she won't hurt you."

The poor creature walked to the bedside, and it seemed as if sanity was vainly struggling to regain its place.

"Come closer," he exclaimed to Hiram, who was standing near him.

Hiram advanced at the word of command, and the other again took his arm; and both stood very still, looking at the dead woman.

"Had we better wake her, think you?"

Hiram shook his head.

"You are right. I must first earn the money—earn the money. Then—then I will wake her. Yes, then I will wake her."

"Is it your wife?" demanded Hiram, timidly, impelled by an irresistible impulse to ask the question.

"Wife!" shouted the other, glaring on Hiram—"wife! who talks to me about wife? Do you? Say quick!—do you?"—and he raised the cleaver in a menacing manner.

"It was not I," said Hiram, with as much calmness as he could command, while he looked at the other fixedly—"it was not I."

"Glad to hear you say so. If it had been, I would have made kindling-wood of you—yes, kindling-wood of you!—That's all got along with," he added, lowering the cleaver. "Now take a seat."

The madman sat down on one side of a small table, and motioned Hiram to occupy the chair opposite.

He did so.

"Now we are comfortable. Don't you think so? Shan't have to move, shall we? Old Mecker, d—n his soul!—don't own this house. Come, let's have a gay old time!"—and he commenced, half-shouting, half-singing:

"Ain't I glad to get out of the wilderness—  
To get out of the wilderness,  
To get out of the wilderness?—  
Ain't I glad to get out of the wilderness?—  
Hip, hip, hurrah!"

Hiram sat pale, but not trembling. He knew his very life depended on his composure, and he believed that the noise which the madman was making would soon bring persons to the spot.


"You don't seem to like my little song," he exclaimed. "I will give you another." And he shouted on:

"I wish I was a horse, as big as any elephant—  
As big as any elephant,  
As big as any elephant—  
I wish I was a horse, as big as any elephant—  
Hip, hip, hurrah!"

"That's better, ain't it?" Suddenly he turned and looked at the corpse.

"Wife—wife! who said 'wife' to me?—who said 'wife' to me?" And he burst forth more furiously than ever:





My wife's dead, and I want another one—  
And I want another one,  
And I want another one—  
My wife's dead, and I want another one—  
Hip, hip, hurrah!"

The man had now become so much excited, that he commenced walking rapidly around the room, brandishing his weapon in a most reckless manner.

Hiram's situation was becoming critical. He did not lose his self-possession, but began to balance the chances of attempting to escape by moving swiftly to the door, against keeping his seat and closely watching the maniac.

As if divining what was passing in his mind, the madman suddenly placed his back to the door, as if to bar any egress, and commenced singing again.

Relief came at last.

Hiram, whose every sense was on the alert, thought he saw the knob of the door turn. He was not mistaken; for now it commenced partially to open.

The maniac, feeling the pressure, turned about, leaving the entrance free—and Dr. Ephraim Peters entered.

He seemed to take in matters at a glance. Addressing the madman in a calm but commanding tone, he said: "How is it that you have disobeyed me? I shall not trust you again. Sit down."

The effect was electrical. An entire change came over the countenance and bearing of the maniac; he dropped the cleaver, and, passing to the other side of the room, took a seat in close proximity to the corpse.

Then turning, the young doctor addressed Hiram: "Is your presence here forced or voluntary?"

"Purely accidental."

"I supposed so. A word with you outside."

To Hiram this was a joyful summons, and he responded with alacrity.

As they went out, the doctor closed the door, and the two stood together in the gloomy hall at the top of the staircase.

"Mr. Meeker, you recognize me, doubtless?"

There was no reply.

"I am Dr. Peters, who called to see you about two weeks ago, on behalf of a poor woman whose dead body is now in that room. I told you, if she had to be moved, it would kill her. Your agent drove her out, and she lies here dead! It has made her husband crazy—a temporary lunacy, I trust—but, whatever it is, there you see the whole.

"I am expecting some persons, every moment," he continued, "who will remain here all night, and I will detain you no longer."

The doctor spoke in such a tone of quiet dignity, that it was impossible for Hiram to reply. He fumbled for a moment in his coat, and then drew out his pocket-book. Producing several bills, he offered them to the doctor, muttering half inaudibly something about his desire to pay funeral-expenses.

The young physician drew back, as if in danger of contamination.

"Your money perish with you!" he said, solemnly. "Think you charity consists in bank-notes?"

The doctor turned and re-entered the chamber; and Hi-

ram Meeker proceeded slowly down the stairs and into the street.

His thoughts, as he walked homeward, were not of an enviable nature. I confess I have no desire to attempt to portray them.

## CHAPTER VII.

HIRAM'S slumbers that night were much disturbed.

His rest was broken by strange dreams, frightful or preposterous, which, running into each other, became blended in a confused mass of floating fancies.

At last he awoke. He opened his eyes. It was perfectly dark.

Suddenly he realized just what he was. No business—no money—no earth—no foothold—nothing but a naked soul.

Hiram lay breathing with slow respirations. Even his piety was not present to support him. The world was swept from under him.

Then came a stern sense—a patent conviction—of all he had counted on: nothing—nothing!

He turned over, and fell asleep again. But still refreshing slumber was denied him; still were the night-visions terrifying.

At last these appeared to take a definite shape. Heaving, working, revolving, the chaotic mass assumed form and grew luminous.

All of a sudden, it changed to one great, bright, burning eye. Then he was the eye—all eye—nothing but eye!

What sights were presented! The eye was gifted with a wonderful vision. It could discern true from false—real from counterfeit—what was genuine from sham and pretence.

More than this. The *eye*—which was Hiram—could discriminate between what men considered valuable and available and important, and also good and essential, and by all means to be secured: I say, the *eye* had the power to distinguish between these, and what was in truth and in very deed good and just and right, and truly to be desired and sought after.

How things changed places!

Some shrank into littleness and utter insignificance, which formerly had large proportions and a towering importance; others, which before seemed puny and of little worth, grew grandly into magnitude, and power, and might.

At a great distance could be observed the habitations of the children of men. They appeared like objects seen through an inverted telescope—far off and exceedingly diminished.

On the shore of the sea, Hiram Meeker was discovered.

He looked no larger than a man's thumb. He had fenced off a portion of the sands, so that no one except himself (and many attempted) could have access thereto. He was engaged transporting these sands in the most careful manner, one by one, into a large warehouse, for better security, as it would seem.

What is wonderful in all this is, that Hiram, the whole time, thought it gold he was storing, whereas the *eye* could perceive it to be sand o — ng sand.

At length the vision faded away. Hiram started up in a mortal agony. The effort woke him, and he gazed wildly around. It was not yet light. Weary and exhausted by what he had passed through, he soon fell asleep, and this time slumbered peacefully.

When he opened his eyes, the sun was shining cheerfully into his room. The whole aspect of things was changed. The old scenes were shifted into place, the old machinery set in motion—Hiram was himself again!

## CHAPTER VIII.

## BURNSVILLE!

I hope the reader is willing to revisit this charming spot. For I confess that I myself feel impelled to do so. Indeed, I sometimes regret following the fortunes of Hiram Meeker to New York. Far more agreeable would it have been to have continued the story of Joel Burns, and showed what a good man may achieve, notwithstanding the workings of the "ancient leaven," and the divers contests which spring up daily within and around him.

But my task once undertaken, I did not feel at liberty to leave it.

I propose, therefore, only a brief visit to the place which the reader may recollect was commenced by Joel Burns in his youth, when his love for Ellen Bellows lent to his already energetic spirit a tenfold force and vigor and perseverance.

The twenty-five years which have told with such effect on New York, have also produced great changes and great improvements in Burnsville. It was a thriving village when we last knew it. Now it is a large town. The higher portion is covered with fine buildings. Churches, hotels, academies, and various institutions for which New England is remarkable, seem specially to flourish here.

There are some old landmarks which I am sure we shall

recognize—Joel Burns's house, for example, and the little brick "office" from which Hiram sallied one morning before daylight to take the stage for New York, to attack Joslin the paper-dealer.

The improvements have been astonishing. Beautiful trees skirt the principal streets, and form an arch above. Everywhere you behold displayed signs of admirable taste.

Below, in the valley, is the railroad; and opposite the "paper-mill" has been erected one of the finest "stations" in the state. Here has sprung up a large manufacturing place, rivalling in size and business importance the "ridge," as we used to call it, but leaving the latter free from the noise and bustle of the mills and factories and machinery of our now-famous "Slab City."

Dr. Egerton married Sarah Burns, as you have long since guessed. He is one of the few men of talent who has no ambition to quit his happy home, to adventure in a large city. He is celebrated far and near, but nothing can draw him away from the spot where a youth he came to watch over a young girl whose life was trembling in the balance.

And Sarah, think you she is not repaid for her fidelity to her father? By it she escaped the grasp of Hiram Meeker, and is now—she has been for years—a loving, trustful, joyous wife.

Happy Sarah Burns! I commenced this narrative by recounting an *unhappy* incident in your life. How grateful is the task of recording your triumph over the greatest danger which can threaten a maiden—the danger of *loving uncorthily*!



Joel Burns! I confess that, of all at Burnsville, it is in you my feelings of interest centre—you, whose romantic fidelity to your wife's memory has thrown a charm over your whole existence. It is a great treasure—is it not?—a heart so true, so loyal, so pure and faithful, that not one, no, not one of all the young and fair and good and fascinating from out this world's fair creation can divert it for a moment, or change its even, constant, ever-loving pulsations. Such a heart you possess, Joel Burns!

Joel Burns was "mated" as well as "married;" and when his wife died, he did not really lose her. In spirit she attended him wherever he went—always near him—more actually present, Joel used sometimes to think, than she ever was before.

How could he wish to marry again, when his wife was all the time by his side—an ever-present, ever-abiding comfort and consolation?

I say, herein lay the charm and the glory of Joel's life. His influence on his place, after it grew beyond the proportions of a village, and became one of the largest towns in the state, was just as great as when it had but a dozen buildings.

Joel did not permit the desire to accumulate to become a passion. On the contrary, he diffused his wealth—not by direct gifts in charity, but by affording everybody around him opportunity to get on and prosper, just exactly as if the world was common to all, and as if all should be allowed a fair chance to live in it!

You have no idea how the attempt to practise this principle enriched the life and nature of Joel Burns.

[There are two Spirits—towering, gigantic Genii—who attend on man: one the Absorbing, the other the Imparting, Spirit. Both are active, energetic, untiring. The former, if it gains access to the soul, commences at once to narrow and impoverish it; while the latter enlarges and makes the soul rich. Herein is explained the old enigma which a dying man is said to have uttered:

“What I kept, I’ve not;  
What I gave, I’ve got.”]

I have remarked that Burnsville was one of the largest towns in the state. This was not only the case, but the immense manufactories in “Slab City” made it much more prominent than any other, and brought it into more direct communication with New York.

Hiram Meeker heard, from time to time, of all that Joel was doing. In fact, impelled by a strong impulse, he took pains to ascertain what progress he made from year to year. But Hiram could not, with all his penetration, fathom a nature like that of Joel. It was always a puzzle to him. For it was not given to a man, who had all his life harbored the wicked Demon *Absorption*, to understand the excellency and happiness of such a life.

But he watched Burnsville. Indeed, he was tempted to make some heavy investments there when the railroad was constructed—of which event, as the leading capitalist of the country, he had the earliest information. He abandoned the idea, however, for he shrank from coming in contact with his old employer.

So Joel Burns lived on his noble, God-given existence.

But, reader, if you think I am endeavoring to depict a faultless person, you are much mistaken. Faultless is lifeless, when applied to human beings. It is in the contest with our faults that the glory of our humanity shines forth. It is this which binds our race together in one great brotherhood. Pray, tell me what we could do with a faultless man or woman. What have we in common with any such person? What sympathy have we with either, or either with us?

Joel Burns was constitutionally ardent and energetic, not to say impetuous. With such characteristics are always strong attending imperfections. He had his share of these. But his motives were honest, his principles right, his intents true; and I declare I think it to be a real felicity and blessing to observe the faults of such a man, and witness how he encounters, and battles with, and conquers them—or if for a moment overcome, to behold his genuine regret and contrition.

I will pursue this no further. I have some work to do in the metropolis. If I linger at Burnsville, I shall be quite unfitted for it—I shall, indeed.

Joel—Joel Burns—farewell!

Ellen Bellows—Ellen Burns—don't you see that Joel has remembered your dying injunction, and has tried to "live right?" Yes, you do. It was for this that you have never forsaken him.

Sarah Egerton smiles on me as I pass out of the gate. A group of children, half grown, and full grown, give me

joyous greeting; and the Doctor waves his hand from his carriage, as he drives along on his errands of mercy and benevolence.

. . . . .

I must make haste. There is no stage to wait five minutes for me. The time-table is a despot.

The train approaches. It has stopped. It is off again, and I am in it.

Burnsville, pleasant Burnsville, adieu!

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## CHAPTER IX.

THE *dénouement* happened in this way:

There was to be a large party at Mrs. Caruthers's, a married daughter of Mrs. Bennett. The Bennetts and the Meekers, by-the-way, always kept up their intimacy. Mr. Bennett is dead. He died the year he was seventy, leaving a large fortune. The widow lives in the old house, and the children are married, and are bringing out *their* children now.

I say, Mrs. Caruthers was to give a large party. Mrs. Meeker, who invariably attended her daughter, could not go. Belle must not go alone. She arranged, so she said, to drive early in the evening to Mrs. Caruthers's, and to stay there all night.

For two or three weeks previous, Belle, under the inspiration of Signor Barbone, who now exercised a complete control over her, had been making, quietly but very efficiently, her arrangements for quitting her father's roof.

By degrees, and with an amazing display of secretiveness, she managed to convey out of the house all that she might require for a considerable absence.

Her jewels were not lost sight of, nor any thing else of value. The Signor had provided proper receptacles for all these articles—indeed, had greatly aided the young lady in

the selection of what to take. More than this—Signor Barbone (*proh pudor!*) had suggested that she should fortify herself with such sums of money as she might be able to get together without exciting suspicion.

Strange as you may think, Belle was possessed of so little delicacy, that she actually entered into the spirit of the enterprise—regarding the affair as a capital joke, enabling her to hold out against papa should he prove obstinate, as he might for a few days (it could only be for a few days), and inclined to be severe.

What with all her jewels, including some recent expensive purchases, made for the first time in her life without payment on the spot (this also at the suggestion of the Signor), and with sums quietly got together for several weeks, including some considerable amounts coaxed from her father on various pretences, and a pretty large sum borrowed over night from mamma—I say, with all this, the “happy pair” were pretty well fortified for their first campaign.

The trying moment arrived.

Mrs. Caruthers, of course, knew nothing of Belle’s tale to her mother, that she was to pass the night at her house. She simply expected Belle to grace her party.

Quite early in the day the young lady ordered a handsome ball-dress placed in a box, and directed it to be taken to her dressmaker, to receive some trifling alterations before evening. She would call in good season there, so she told her mother, and order it sent to Mrs. Caruthers’s.

Then, waiting for Mrs. Meeker to take her morning drive, she went to her room and hurried on a travelling-dress.

She was going down-stairs, when Harriet's nurse opened the door of her young mistress's apartment, and asked her to step a moment into the room. •

Belle turned with all the composure she could muster; she curbed her impatience, and looked amiable.

"Oh, are you going out, Belle?"

"Yes, dear; you know I am to be early at Mrs. Caruthers's. Mamma can't go with me—so I am to stay all night."

"Why, you have on your travelling-dress!"

"It looks odd, doesn't it?—I have sent my ball-dress to Laroche, to be altered a little; and I have to call there now, and I want her to see me in this. Do you know, I don't think she has fitted me well at all?"

"It seems to me quite perfect."

"Hatty, dear, did you want me?"

This she said still standing, as if in haste to go.

"Oh, no. I thought you were going into the parlor, and I was about to ask you to sit with me a little while. I have something to say to you about Gus. I want you to talk to papa. You know papa will listen to *you*. Tell him—never mind, dear, to-morrow will do as well—I hope you will have a pleasant evening."

"Thank you, dear. Good-by."

She turned and opened the door.

By a sort of instinctive tenderness not denied to any human creature, Belle paused and looked back, and, hesitating a moment, returned; going to where her sister was reclining, she kissed her affectionately, without speaking one word.

Harriet's eyes suffused; she was quite unused to such a demonstration.

• "My darling sister," she whispered.

Belle was already out of the room. She bounded down the staircase, passed hastily through the hall, and was soon walking rapidly along the street.

One hour from that time, she was on her way to New Jersey.

A clergyman had been provided in that state to perform the marriage ceremony.

When the six o'clock New York train for Philadelphia passed through Newark, it received on board Mr. and Mrs. Filippo Barbone, who were just starting on their wedding-excursion.

It was the commencement of the honeymoon.

. . . . .

No wonder, the next day, that Belle is late. We who are in the secret will not be astonished; neither does Mrs. Meeker think it at all strange that Belle should not return in the morning after the excitement of a grand evening display such as Mrs. Caruthers will be sure to have.

The day wears on. As the dinner-hour approaches, Mrs. Meeker decides to send the carriage for her.

The coachman soon drives up before Mrs. Caruthers's; and the footman, descending, announces simply that he has called for Miss Belle. The answer which is brought to him is, that Miss Belle is not in the house. He returns and reports accordingly.

Although this little incident is very annoying to Mrs. Meeker, still she has no other idea than that Belle has



stopped to make some call or do some shopping on her way home.

Had she considered a moment, she would have perceived how unreasonable was such a supposition. But, as Mrs. Meeker could not have the slightest suspicion of the truth, she was forced to imagine something.

In the midst of her perplexity, Hiram entered. He was so accustomed, and especially of late, to his daughter's greeting at the door, that he missed these affectionate tokens of her presence when he entered the house.

"Where is Belle?" he said, as he came into the parlor.

"Belle has not returned yet from Mrs. Caruthers's. It is rather strange. I have just sent the carriage for her. Wakeman brings back word that she is not there."

"Wakeman is an idiot!" exclaimed Hiram, with a degree of temper so unusual, that Mrs. Meeker started—"an idiot! I dare say he did not make his message intelligible."

Now, "Wakeman" was Mrs. Meeker's private servant, —a family servant, she was pleased to say; thereby meaning, not that he had been in the employ of her father, honest Thorn the plumber, nor yet in the service of her mother, the "poor relation," but that in fact he was her servant before she was married, and had remained *par excellence* her servant ever since.

She therefore rose in arms at once, in vindication of her favorite, and was about to work herself into one of her customary manifestations, which Hiram was evidently in no state of mind to bear, when there was suddenly a ring at the door. An instant's parley, and the servant entered, bearing a note to Mr. Meeker.

The superscription was in Belle's handwriting.

A "terrible sagacity" informed Hiram's heart of something dreadful about to shock it. He tore open the envelope with fierceness, and read as follows:

"DEAR PAPA: Don't be angry with me. I was married yesterday to Filippo Barbone. I married him because I love him, and could never love any one else. I knew you would not consent, but I could not live without him. Forgive your little girl, dear papa, and write me to come back to you with my dear Filippo. Oh, I know you will like him. Send to me at the Gresham House, Philadelphia. I shall be in agony till I hear from you. Love to dear mamma and Harriet. If I only had your forgiveness, how happy I should be, dear, dear papa! Your little BELLE."

[This letter, mainly the production of the Signor, was prepared and put into the hands of his accomplice before the runaways set off, with directions to watch for Hiram's entrance into his house, and deliver immediately after.]

Never before did Hiram Meeker give way to such an exhibition of rage.

He glared fiercely about him, as if endeavoring to find some person on whom to vent it.

There was no one but his wife, who stood directly before him, her angry reply in favor of "Wakeman" having been cut short by the entrance of the servant with the note.

As Hiram's glance fell on her, a sudden suspicion seized him that she was in some way privy to the affair. In an instant he had grasped her arm, and, shaking her with all

his might, he exclaimed, "Wretch!—monster!—she-devil!—limb of Satan!"

The affair was serious enough certainly, but it had a ludicrous aspect. There was Arabella, without having the slightest idea of what could cause such a violent outbreak, tossed about like a whirligig by the usually calm, sedate, and self-possessed Hiram, who seemed suddenly transported into a very demon.

Portions of her head-dress began to come down. A pair of side-curls dropped—a first-rate shot, a sportsman would say—the effect of a double shake and a sudden fetch-up. Next a profusion of hair from the back of the head tumbled off. Teeth began to chatter, and various portions of the structure in which she was encased, to give way.

All this time, Arabella was vainly endeavoring to give utterance to various exclamations, but she could only gasp out some unintelligible sound, while her eyes flashed fire and her cheeks burned with rage.

At last Hiram was exhausted, and with exhaustion came some little thought of what he had been doing. He relinquished his hold of his wife, picked up the note which he had dropped on the floor, put it into her hands, and quit the room.

Hiram stood a moment in the hall, quite overcome by the revulsion that succeeded the storm. Then he slowly mounted the stairs, and proceeded to the room of his invalid child.

Harriet was so struck with the change in her father's countenance, that she started up and exclaimed, "Why, papa, what is the matter?"

"We are disgraced, my child!" said Hiram, in a hollow voice.

"How? What do you mean?"

"Your sister has run away with a low, vile swindler. My curse rest on her forever!"

"Oh, not so—say not so!" replied Harriet, imploringly.

"Tell me, my child," said Hiram, mournfully, while he seated himself by her side and took her hand—"tell your father truly, did you know any thing about this?"

"No, papa. I do not even now know what you mean."

Quite calmly Hiram told his daughter what had occurred. The travelling-dress, and Belle's last kiss, flashed on her mind. She repeated the circumstance.

"And you know nothing of this Filippo Barbone?" said Hiram, forcing himself with difficulty to pronounce the name.

"Nothing."

"And your mother?" continued he, slowly, and in a tone which terrified his child.

"Oh, I am sure she knew nothing about it, perfectly sure. I know she did not wish Belle to go to Mrs. Caruthers's, because she could not go with her; and even after Belle made the arrangement to stay all night, mamma did not seem to be at all satisfied."

Hiram was convinced, and the want of an object on which to wreak his anger now served to exhaust it.

He leaned his face upon the side of his daughter's couch, and groaned.

Harriet put her hand gently upon his cheek. "Papa," she said, timidly, "may I tell you what to do?"

Hiram raised his head. His face was very haggard, but he made no reply.

"Send for Belle to come back, and her husband too, and let us make them happy," said Harriet, almost abruptly.

"Never! My curse is on her! She is no longer my child—I disinherit her!"

"Give her my portion, then—I shall not require it."

Hiram started—a new idea had struck him. It was as if somehow he had received a new accession of wealth by the surrender of Harriet's share. A strange confusion of ideas, certainly; but the thought grew on him, as we shall see by-and-by. Now, however, it gave place to the dominant feeling.

Harriet, encouraged by his silence, broke in again—"Won't you, papa?" she whispered.

Hiram turned and looked at her angrily, but was compelled to lower his countenance before his daughter's earnest, truthful, heavenly gaze.

He started up and went back to the parlor. He began to feel ashamed of his violence toward his wife, and was anxious to dispose of the matter as soon as possible.

To return to Arabella.

As soon as her husband had left her, she proceeded to read the note he placed in her hands. That accomplished, she took the precaution to ring the bell several times with great energy; and, having disposed of the little articles which lay scattered on the floor, she threw herself on the sofa, in violent hysterics.

When Hiram entered, these were at once renewed. Her husband understood this phase of her constitution; and,

directing the maid-servants to remove their mistress to her own room, he ordered dinner to be served.

I will do him the justice to say he ate little or nothing. Two or three times the waiter observed that his master put his hand to his head and then to his heart, as if endeavoring to tranquillize himself.

After dinner, he mounted his horse, and rode several miles. When he returned, one would not have known, to look at him, that any thing unusual had happened.

During the next week Hiram was occupied in making his will. A new and important idea seemed to have possession of him.

From that period he never permitted his daughter's name to be mentioned, and would receive no communication from her.

Arabella's hysterics continued, at intervals, for several days. Her husband, in view of his violence toward her, was very considerate, but the affair was never alluded to by either.

Arabella, perhaps, felt that she deserved some punishment for tolerating the "Count in disguise;" and Hiram never got over a certain feeling of mortification when he thought of the scene in the parlor.

Here we leave all the parties for the present.

## CHAPTER X.

THE reader must imagine a lapse of five years.

Hiram Meeker sits by an open window of his front parlor. It is the first week in June; and, although early in the afternoon, the avenue is beginning to be thronged with the fashionable world.

Hiram sits, idly regarding the passers-by. If you observe particularly, you will perceive that the chair in which he is sitting is of a peculiar construction. It is made so as to be wheeled from one point to another, without disturbing the occupant.

If you regard his countenance with a little more scrutiny, you will find it greatly changed. There is no longer that firm texture of the skin which indicates the vigor of health, and which shows that the muscles are under full control. One side of the face is a very little out of shape; not enough, however, to affect the appearance of the mouth, and probably not to interfere with articulation.

. . . . .

Reader, the "evil days" have come to Hiram. They have come, but, as one might say, gently, without aggravating circumstances or attending misfortunes. Still, the evil days *have* come. The "years," too, draw nigh when he shall have no pleasure in them.

It is a twelvemonth now since the fatal, long-dreaded *Paralysis* came. The stroke was a mild one, but there it was. All that care, and forethought, and the best medical advice could accomplish, had been put in requisition, and not without effect; but the millionaire could not neglect his vast interests, or fail to mature plans which his fertile brain originated.

The machine gave occasional token of the wear and tear to which it was subjected. Then Hiram would intermit his labor; would ride farther and sharper of a morning; would subject himself to an extra amount of friction. Presently the brain would work bravely on again, as of yore, just the same—exactly the same. Hiram could perceive no difference—none. Then would come another premonitory symptom, which would be followed by other extra rides and various new courses of treatment, till all worked well again. During these periods, Doctor Frank, under whose charge Hiram had at length placed himself, would urge on his brother the necessity of some relief from his self-imposed labors. But, as I have intimated, the advice was heeded only while danger was apparent.

When the fearful visitor *did* appear, Hiram bitterly regretted tasking his brain so severely. He was now quite willing to obey every injunction and follow every suggestion of his physician.

To this is owing his present comfortable state and tolerable degree of health. But privately let me tell you that he is failing—not fast, but gradually, surely failing.

. . . . .

Let us return to the window.



Mrs. Meeker's carriage is at the door. In a few moments Arabella herself comes out and enters it, and drives away. Positively, she does not appear in the least changed since we last saw her. In fact, her health was never so good as at present.

"She will outlive me," mutters Hiram—"she will outlive me, though she is more than two years older than I am. Let me see, from April to November is seven months. Yes, it is nearer three years than two. She will outlive me, though.

"I say, Williams!"

"Yes, sir."

"Williams, have you heard how Mr. Hill is to-day? I am told he is not expected to live."

"No more he wasn't, sir; but I met his man this morning, at market, and he says as how Mr. Hill is very much better, sir, very much better."

"Humph!"

"Williams, who was that young man I saw come to the door this morning?"

"I really couldn't say, sir—I didn't know of any, sir—O, now I recollect, sir: it was a messenger from the Doctor, sir, with the new friction-gloves."

"Humph!—"

"You understand, Williams, if *that* young man ever comes near the house—you know who I mean—I say, you—you understand what I told you?"

"Oh, yes, sir—certainly, sir."

"That will do, Williams."

"Hill is getting better, is he?" pursues Hiram to himself.

"Let me see—Hill must be at least four years older than I. Yes, I recollect perfectly when he was at Joslin's, the time I came down from Burnsville. Why, I was a mere boy then, and Hill—Hill was a young man of five-and-twenty. Yes, I recollect perfectly"—and Hiram smiled, as if his encounter with Joslin and his clerk was fresh in his mind. "So Hill is better to-day," he continued. "He will outlive me too. Yet he is certainly four years older—four years older."

. . . . .

There may be some of my readers who have taken sufficient interest in "that scapegrace Hill" to wish to know something about him during these last thirty years.

I will say, therefore, that when Hiram jilted Emma Tenant, Hill took a perfect disgust toward him. He presently quit drinking and swearing, and married a pretty—indeed, a very charming—rosy-cheeked girl, whose only fault was, as he said, that she was foolish enough to love him. This girl was the daughter of his landlady, and not worth a penny—in money. Till Hiram's "affair" with Emma Tenant, he had exercised sufficient influence over Hill to prevent his committing himself. That resulted in Hill's throwing off the yoke, and announcing his independence. Hill was no fool. The fact is, Hiram, to a certain extent, was in his power. The parties never quarrelled. But all accounts were closed between them the following season. I am constrained to add Hill continued in the liquor-business, in which he amassed a pretty large fortune. He was afterward made President of the Globe Bank, one of the largest in the city, as all know, which office he continues to hold.

He has proved a good husband, a kind father, and a useful member of society. The phrase is a stereotyped one, but it is true of Hill.

. . . . .

Leaving Hiram Meeker to pursue his soliloquy, I will endeavor to put the reader in possession of such facts as may be necessary for the better understanding of the narrative, and the present situation of affairs in Hiram's own house.

After the departure of Belle, I remarked that Hiram was busily engaged for more than a week in preparing his will. With the defection of his son and the elopement of his favorite daughter, Hiram's ideas took a new and distinctive turn.

He at one time had considerable pride in the idea of building up the family name in his children, "even unto his children's children." This he thought a laudable ambition, since he found the phrase in Scripture. But when Belle deserted him, and he found himself not only forsaken but duped, his feelings underwent an entire change.

When Harriet, in her anxiety to induce her father to bring back her sister, said, "Give her my share—I shall not require it," there was stirred in Hiram's heart the old demon of Calculation and Acquisitiveness. It seemed as if something had been saved to him by Harriet's untimely departure from the world. It is difficult fully to understand this, since, while he lived, certainly he would retain control of all his property; and after his death, what could it avail him? Nevertheless, I but recount the simple truth.

That night he conceived the idea of a magnificent dispo-

sition of his vast estate, to take place on his decease. Now he began to regard his afflictions in a providential light. These were chastenings, at present not joyous but grievous; but they would work out for him a more eternal weight of glory.

The consequence was, that by his will he founded three distinct public institutions, all bearing his name; and prepared, at the same time, minute directions how to carry his bequests into effect. These institutions were not what are called charitable, neither did their establishment indicate a heart easily touched by human misfortune. They were calculated, however, to adorn and ornament the city, and to blazon forth **HIRAM MEEKER** to the world so long as they stood.

One thing threatened to interfere with Hiram's arrangements. His wife would have a right of dower in all his real estate, in case she survived him. This annoyed Hiram greatly.

He got along with the matter in a business way. Arabella herself was called in. Hiram announced, in general terms, what he proposed to do, and suggested that he was ready to leave her a sum certain, provided she would relinquish her rights in the real estate.

Under ordinary circumstances, Arabella would have been indignant; but her thoughts were of her son, now a wanderer from his home. She was tolerably familiar with the laws which regulate property. She knew if she insisted on her dower, which she had a right to do, that however affluent she would be while she lived, she would have nothing to leave her child. She did not give Belle a thought.

After a good deal of haggling, it was agreed that Hiram should give her by his will three hundred thousand dollars (just about the sum, by-the-way, she brought her husband), together with the household furniture, plate, horses, carriages, and so forth, and the use of the house during her life.

This settled, Hiram was left free to follow out his ambitious plans for raising a monument to—himself.

These occupy him entirely. So much so, that he has no time to look forward to the great future which cannot now be very far off to him. Indeed, strange as one may think, although Hiram feels well assured of his title to the kingdom, he *thinks* very little about it; neither does the prospect give him the least satisfaction.

Meanwhile, where is Harriet? What has become of Belle? How did Gus turn out?

Harriet survived longer than one would have imagined, considering the progress disease had made when we first became acquainted with her. While she lived, she could not fail to impart her influence—the influence of a gentle and a chastened spirit—over the whole household.

I have already intimated that there was a new tie between her and her mother—the worldly-minded and fashionable Arabella. It was in the interest which both felt in Gus. It seemed to be the chief object of Harriet in living, to bring back her brother to his home, and to see him in the right path. The mother longed to bring about the same thing, but probably for very different reasons from those which actuated the dying girl. But here their sympathies met,

and they could act in concert. Gus had always been sensibly alive to Harriet's regard for him. He loved her with real affection; and when, in a foreign land, he read her letters, fraught with the strongest expressions of love and sympathy, and filled with the most earnest appeals from his "dying sister, whose every breath was a prayer for him," it was impossible for his nature to resist.

In a few months, Gus had taken his resolution. He abhorred trade. His four years in college were not altogether lost on him. He felt quite sure that his father would never relent. He believed he discovered in himself a taste for the medical profession. So, after a short period, Gus established himself in a very quiet way in Paris, and became a very persevering and devoted student. His mother, of course, managed to keep him in funds; but his drafts on her were very moderate. His reformation seemed complete.

After devoting about eighteen months to the study of medicine abroad, he returned to New York. This was the season before Harriet died. He said he could not endure the idea of her passing out of the world without his seeing her again, and telling her what was in his heart.

Hiram all this time remained, or professed to remain, profoundly ignorant of what was going on. He continued to speak of his "reprobate son," among his acquaintances in the church. The least attempt on Harriet's part to introduce the forbidden subject was met by the most stern repulse.

But Gus came back. He was obliged to enter his own home stealthily and in secret, where he deserved to be welcomed back in honor and with reward. But he came.

What was the joy, the intense satisfaction of Harriet, to see him again! And Arabella—it was a strange sight indeed to see *her* give way to any real emotion.

Perhaps, before this, you have guessed that Dr. Frank has had something to do with Gus's return. He has had a great deal to do with it. Dr. Frank is an old man. He has no boys—living. He wants Gus to live with him. He will give him the benefit of his large experience, and Gus in return will relieve the Doctor of much of the hard work which is constantly accumulating. This is Dr. Frank's plan. It has been carried out, and Gus is now "the young Doctor." Bravo, Gus! God bless you!

. . . . .

Poor Belle!

At the end of a single year, she was obliged to quit her husband. Quit her husband, did I say? I mean that her husband quitted her. After spending a few weeks in travelling, the two set off for Europe; and, going to Paris, they gave themselves up to the enjoyment of the gay scenes which this remarkable city affords.

"When the ocean shall be between us, papa will no longer hold out—I know he will not."

So Belle said to her husband. But Belle was mistaken. Months passed, and destitution stared the couple in the face. Then the various articles of jewelry went, one by one—and then the crisis arrived.

When Signor Filippo Barbone became fully satisfied that his father-in-law was not to be turned from his resolution; when it became apparent that the mother was not to be influenced, he came to the conclusion that he had made a

bad bargain, and resolved to escape as soon as possible from the consequences of it.

Belle, on her part, began to be disenchanted. Then all the elements of her imperious, passionate nature, broke out in the fiercest, most vehement, most vindictive manner. She heaped reproaches, taunts, and maledictions, on the head of the Signor, who bore them with more equanimity than would be supposed, but who determined not to have another such tempest. One night he decamped, taking with him the few remaining valuables the miserable girl possessed.

Belle had not communicated with Gus, or even permitted him to know her whereabouts. Now she wrote him a note, imploring him to come to her. He responded at once, and instantly made what arrangements he could for her comfort. After a season, and by the joint efforts of Gus and Harriet and Dr. Frank, Belle was enabled to go back to New York. Her father would not see her; her mother would not permit her to enter the house; but a small weekly stipend was allowed, to enable her to board in a respectable place, and to dress decently.

Her unfortunate marriage has had very little effect on her. She never was so handsome in her life. She enjoys exciting the sympathy of those by whom she is surrounded, including half-a-dozen gentlemen who are constantly dangle around her. A young lawyer, who was boarding at the same house, undertook to institute proceedings for a divorce against the absent Signor. He was successful in his application, and Belle is now legally free. She will probably marry some man of coarse taste, who will be attracted



by her fine form and showy appearance, to say nothing of the effect of the prevalent belief that she will certainly be provided for "on old Meeker's death."

. . . . .

So much for the present situation of the Meeker family. While Arabella is taking her drive, I have had time to tell the reader thus much about it. The carriage is now approaching, and I must stop.

. . . . .

The shadows of evening begin to gather. Along the great artery of the city press the crowd. Their steps tend homeward.

Still Hiram sits by the window, but oblivious of the current which sweeps by.

His thoughts go back to Hampton. He is a clerk in the "opposition store," making love to Mary Jessup.

"What a pretty girl she used to be!—how much she always did for me—what pains she took to please me!" he mutters to himself.

. . . . .

Now he is thinking of Burnsville. His mind seems principally to dwell on what was formerly of secondary importance to him.

"Those Hawkins girls—they were good girls—very kind to me always—nice girls—handsome girls—both of them in love with me. The widow Hawkins, too . . . ."

. . . . .

"Ellen Burns—she was a different sort from the rest. I don't think I ever cared so much about her—too independent—thought too much of herself. How quick she broke

.

the engagement! I remember it was preparatory lecture—  
preparatory lecture. . . .

“Emma Tenant—*she* wasn’t proud—Emma really loved  
me—I always knew she did. . . .”

He raised his eyes.

Was it through some such species of attraction as believers in Odic force, and other peculiar affinities, attribute to their influences, that he did so at that moment?

*There* was Emma Tenant—Mrs. Lawrence—passing in her carriage, surrounded by blooming, grown-up children.

Her attention, it seems, was directed for an instant to the window. Their gaze met.

No outward sign that they were ever acquainted, was manifested. But there was, on both sides, a *recognition*, instantaneous and complete.

“Poor old man!” exclaimed Mrs. Lawrence, involuntarily.

“Who, mamma?”

“We have passed him now.” And no more was said.

“She loved me once,” was the soliloquy. “That was a great while ago, too. . . .”

Another carriage passed. A bow from a lady, accompanied by a pleasant smile. It is Miss Innis (Mrs. Leroy), driving out with *her* children. Though no longer young, she is still a most attractive and elegant woman.

“What a wife she would have made me! I should not be in this state if I had had her to look after me. She *has* a kind heart—always smiling, always happy.”

"Mr. Meeker!"

The sharp voice of Arabella is heard.

Hiram groans in spirit.

"Don't you think you had better be wheeled to your room? You know I dine out to-day."

"I prefer to sit here. Tell Williams to come to me."

The shadows fall thicker and faster.

Still Hiram Meeker sits by the window.

Despite my real inclination, I have a morbid desire to linger by his side.

I hear the sharp ring of the prompter's bell! The curtain is about to fall. I *cannot* stay in the gloom alone with that man!—Good-by to you, Hiram!

I breathe again—in the cheerful streets, surrounded by bustling, earnest, sympathizing humanity.

Reader, what think you? WAS HE SUCCESSFUL?

THE END.







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